

Æ

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Æ (minuscule: **æ**) is a grapheme named aesc or ash, formed from the letters *a* and *e*. Originally a ligature representing a Latin diphthong, it has been promoted to the full status of a letter in the alphabets of some languages, including Danish, Norwegian, Icelandic and Faroese. As a letter of the Old English Latin alphabet, it was called *æsc* ("ash tree") after the Anglo-Saxon futhorc rune ᚱ (ᚦ), which it transliterated; its traditional name in English is still **ash** /æʃ/.



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Usage

English

In English, usage of the ligature varies in different places. In modern typography, and where technological limitations make its use difficult (such as in use of typewriters, first telegraphs or ASCII), *æ* is often eschewed in favour of the digraph *ae*. Usage experts often consider this incorrect, especially when rendering foreign words where *æ* is considered a letter (e.g. *Æsir*, *Ærø*) or brand names which make use of the ligature (e.g. *Æon Flux*, *Encyclopædia Britannica*). In the United States, the problem of the ligature is sidestepped in many cases by use of a simplified spelling with "e", as has also happened with *œ*. Usage however may vary; for example, *medieval* is now more common than *mediaeval* (and the now old-fashioned *mediæval*) even in the UK,^[1] while *archaeology* is preferred over *archeology* even in the US.^[2] Given their long history, ligatures are sometimes used to invoke archaism or in literal quotations of historic sources; for instance, words such as *dæmon* or *æther* are often treated in this way. The ligature is seen on gravestones of the 19th century, short for "ævum" (age at the time of death), i.e. "Æ xxYs, yyMs, zzDs." It is also common in formal typography (invitations, resolutions, announcements, and some government documents).



Æ alone and in context



Vanuatu's domestic airline operated under the name Air Melanesiæ in the 1970s.

Greek Origin and Latin Transliteration

The combination *ae* is the Latin transliteration of the Greek diphthong *αι* (alpha iota), and appeared originally in words borrowed from Greek.

In Classical Latin, the combination *AE* denotes the diphthong [ai], which had a value similar to the long *i* in *fine* as pronounced in most dialects of modern English.^[3] Both classical and present practice is to write the letters separately, but the ligature was used in medieval and early modern writings in part because *æ* was reduced to the simple vowel [ɛ] in the imperial period. In some medieval scripts, the ligature was simplified to *ę*, small letter *e* with ogonek, the *e caudata*. This form further simplified into a plain *e*, which may have influenced or been influenced by the pronunciation change. However, the ligature is still relatively common in liturgical books and musical scores.

French

In the modern French alphabet, *æ* is used to spell Latin and Greek borrowings like *tænia* and *ex æquo*. It was greatly popularized in Serge Gainsbourg's song *Elaeudanla Têitêia* (i.e. "L, A, E dans l'A, T, I, T, I, A"), which is the spelling in French of the name Lætitia.

Germanic languages

Old English

In Old English, *æ* denotes a sound intermediate between *a* and *e* ([æ]), a sound very much like the short *a* of *cat* in many dialects of modern English.

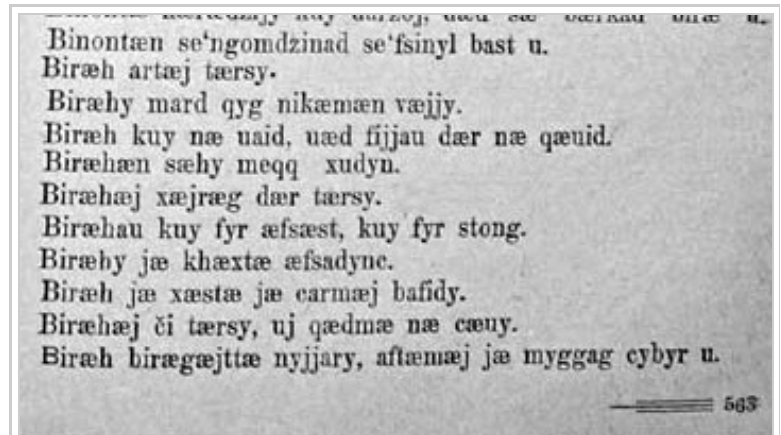
Faroese

In most varieties of Faroese, *æ* is pronounced as follows:

- [ɛa] when simultaneously stressed and occurring either word-finally, before a vowel letter, before a single consonant letter, or before the consonant-letter groups *kl*, *kr*, *pl*, *pr*, *tr*, *kj*, *tj*, *sj* and those consisting of *ð* and one other consonant letter except for *ðr* when pronounced like *gr* (except as below)
- a rather open [eɪ] when directly followed by the sound IPA: [a], as in *ræðast* (silent *ð*) and *frægari* (silent *g*)
- IPA: [a] in all other cases

One of its etymological origins is Old Norse *é* (the other is Old Norse *æ*), and this is particularly evident in the dialects of Suðuroy, where *Æ* is IPA: [eɪ] or [ɛ]:

- *æða* (eider): Suð. [eɪa], Northern Faroese [ɛaɪva]
- *ætt* (family, direction): Suð. [ɛtɪ], Northern Faroese [atɪ]



Ossetic Latin script. Part of a page from a book published in 1935

Icelandic

In Icelandic, *æ* signifies the diphthong [ai].

Danish and Norwegian

In Danish and Norwegian, *æ* represents monophthongal vowel phonemes. In Norwegian, there are four ways of pronouncing the letter:

- /æɪ/ as in *æ* (the name of the letter), *bær*, *læring*, *æra*, *Ænes*, *ærlig*, *tærne*, *Kværner*, *Dæhlie*, *særs*, *ærfugl*, *lært*, *trær* ("trees")
- /æ/ as in *færre*, *æsj*, *nærmere*, *Færder*, *Skjærvø*, *ærverdig*, *vært*, *lærd*, *Bræin* (where *æi* is pronounced as a diphthong /æi/)
- /eɪ/ as in *Sæther*, *Næser*, *Sæbø*, *gælisk*, *spælsau*, *bevæpne*, *sæd*, *æser*, *Cæsar*, *væte*, *trær* ("thread(s)" (verb))
- /e/ as in *Sæth*, *Næss*, *Brønne*, *Bækkelund*, *Vollebæk*, *væske*, *trædd*

In many western, northern, and southwestern Norwegian dialects, and in the western Danish dialects of Thy and Southern Jutland, *æ* has a significant meaning: the first person singular pronoun I, and it is thus a normal spoken word; usually, it is written as *æ* when these dialects are rendered in writing.

In western and southern Jutish dialects of Danish, *æ* is also the proclitic definite article: *æ hus* (the house), as opposed to Standard Danish and all other Nordic varieties which have enclitic definite articles (Danish, Swedish, Norwegian: *huset*, Icelandic, Faroese: *húsið* (the house)). These dialects are rarely committed to writing but some dialect literature exists.

German

In the medieval era, German used *æ* to represent a long vowel where *ä* was used for the shorter version.

Ossetic

The Ossetic language used the letter *æ* when it was written using the Latin script (1923–38). Since then, Ossetian has used a Cyrillic alphabet with an identical-looking letter (Æ and æ). It is pronounced as a mid-central vowel (schwa).

South America

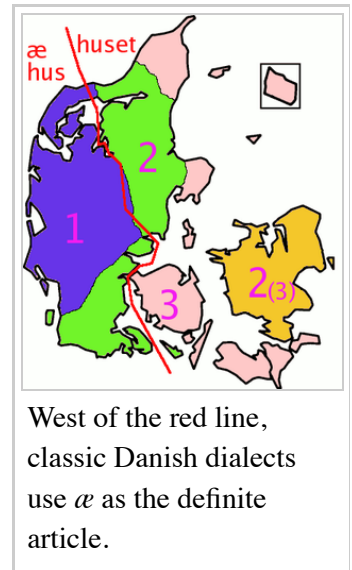
The letter *æ* is used in the official orthography of Kawésqar spoken in Chile and also in that of the Fuegian language Yaghan.

International Phonetic Alphabet

The symbol [æ] is also used in the International Phonetic Alphabet to denote a near-open front unrounded vowel like in the word *cat* in many dialects of modern English: this is the sound most likely represented by the Old English letter. In this context, it is always in lowercase.

Computer encodings and entering

- When using the Latin-1 or Unicode/HTML character sets, the code points for Æ and æ are U+00C6 Æ LATIN CAPITAL LETTER AE (HTML `Æ` · `Æ`) and U+00E6 æ LATIN SMALL LETTER AE (HTML `æ` · `æ`), respectively.
- The characters can be entered by holding the Alt key while typing in 0198 (upper case) or 0230 (lower case) on the number pad on Windows systems (the Alt key and 145 for æ or 146 for Æ may also work from the legacy IBM437 codepage).



- In the TeX typesetting system, *æ* is produced by `\ae`.
- In Microsoft Word, *Æ* and *æ* can be written using the key combination CTRL + SHIFT + & followed by A or a respectively.
- On US-International keyboards, *Æ* is accessible with the combination of AltGr+z.
- In X, AltGr+A is often mapped to æ/Æ, or a Compose key sequence Compose + a + e can be used. For more information, see Unicode input.
- In all versions of the Mac OS (Systems 1 through 7, Mac OS 8 and 9, and the current OS X), the following key combinations are used:
æ: Option + ' (apostrophe key), *Æ*: Option + Shift + '.
- On the iPhone, iPod touch and iPad, as well as phones running Google's Android OS or Windows Mobile OS and on the Kindle Touch and Paperwhite, æ and *Æ* are accessed by holding down "A" until a small menu is displayed.
- The Icelandic keyboard layout has a separate key for *Æ* (and *Ð*, *P* and *Ö*).



Danish keyboard with keys for *Æ*, *Ø* and *Å*.

On Norwegian keyboards the *Æ* and *Ø* trade places.

Cyrillic

- There is also the Cyrillic *Æ* and *æ* in Unicode (U+04D4 *Æ* CYRILLIC CAPITAL LIGATURE A IE (HTML `Ӕ`) and U+04D5 *æ* CYRILLIC SMALL LIGATURE A IE (HTML `ӕ`); note the name being *A IE*), though in practice the Latin letters *Æ* and *æ* (U+00C6, U+00E6) are used in Cyrillic texts (such as on Ossetian sites on the Internet).

See also

- *Æ* (Cyrillic)
- Ae (digraph)
- Å
- Ä
- E caudata
- Ø
- Ö
- Œ
- Near-open front unrounded vowel (represented by æ in the IPA)



The *Æ* character (among others, including Å and ø) is accessible using AltGr+z on a modern US-International keyboard

- Ansuz rune
- List of words that may be spelled with a ligature
- Anavae

References


1. The spelling *medieval* is given priority in both Oxford (<http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/medieval>) and Cambridge (<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/mediaeval>) Advanced Learner's Dictionary. Accessed September 22, 2014.
 2. Merriam-Webster Advanced Learner's Dictionary (<http://www.learnersdictionary.com/definition/archaeology>). Accessed September 22, 2014.
 3. James Morwood (1999). *Latin Grammar*, Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0-19-860199-9, p. 3
- Robert Bringhurst (2002). *The Elements of Typographic Style*, page 271. Vancouver, Hartley & Marks. ISBN 0-88179-205-5

External links

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Categories: Latin alphabet ligatures | Phonetic transcription symbols

| Danish language | Norwegian language | Icelandic language | Faroese language | Ossetian language
 | Old English language | Vowel letters | Uncommon Latin letters



Look up ***Category:English terms spelled with Æ*** in Wiktionary, the free dictionary.

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