



The World of Languages
and Languages of the World



Queen Mary
Invented
Languages
Scheme

Choosing Your Sounds

Today, let's think about the type of sounds you want in your language.

Acknowledgements

- Adapted with thanks from the Queen Mary Invented Languages Scheme materials, protected under CC-BY-NC.
- Thanks to Professor David Adger and Dr Coppe van Urksor at <https://creatinglanguages.org/>



CREATING YOUR OWN WORLD

Create an imaginary planet or island.

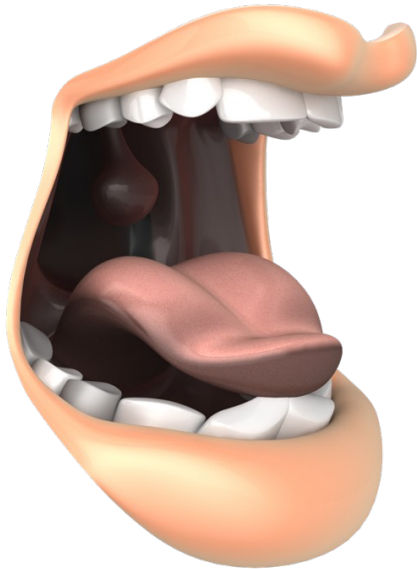
Make sure you have

- Rivers
- Harbours and bays
- A volcano
- Mountains
- Forests
- Towns
- Directions (North, South, ...)

Now we're going to create a language so you can name the things on your planet or island.



Sounds and Letters 1



In English, we make sounds by stopping the air in the mouth and then releasing it. These are called “stops”.

- Practise saying apa, aba, ata, ada, aka, aga

Where do you make these sounds in your mouth-lips, tongue, throat?

Can you feel the difference?

What about in other languages? Think about the uvular stop: the Q in the Arabic word Qu’ran.

Sounds and Letters 2

There are sounds called “fricatives” which are made when you don’t stop the air entirely, you just make it turbulent (like blowing).

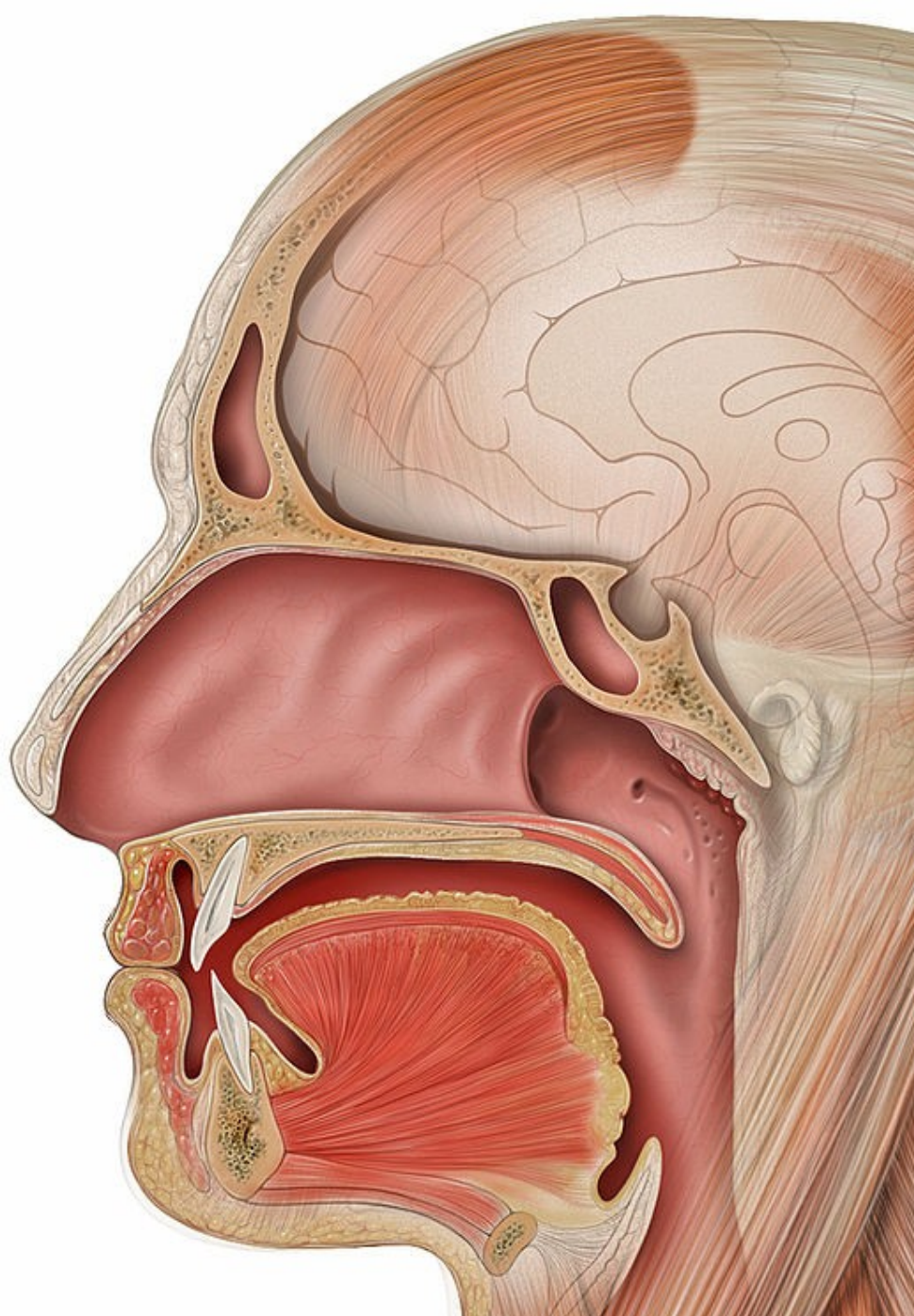
- Practise saying afa, ava, atha, adha, asa, aza, asha, azha, aha

How do you make these sounds? Notice how you use your lips, tongue, teeth, throat and breath.

What about in other languages? The fricative in the *ch* in the Scots pronunciation of loch. We use this a lot in German and Dutch.



WolLow the HIPPO



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Sounds and Letters 3

You can make the air even less turbulent, so you just modify the shape of the mouth: semi-vowels.

- Practise saying ala; ara; awa; aya

You can also allow the air to come out of the nose, when you stop it in the mouth.

- Practise saying ama, ana, anga or try saying the Spanish ñ.

Sounds and Letters

Some sounds are written in English using more than one letter. Which ones? (Think about digraphs and trigraphs).

Sometimes different sounds are not distinguished by the letters we use. Which ones? (Think about the “u” in the word “unit”)

What stops will your language have?

What fricatives?

What semi-vowels?

How will you write these sounds down?

Will you use digraphs for any of them?

DESIGN N CHOICE E 1

Choosing Vowels

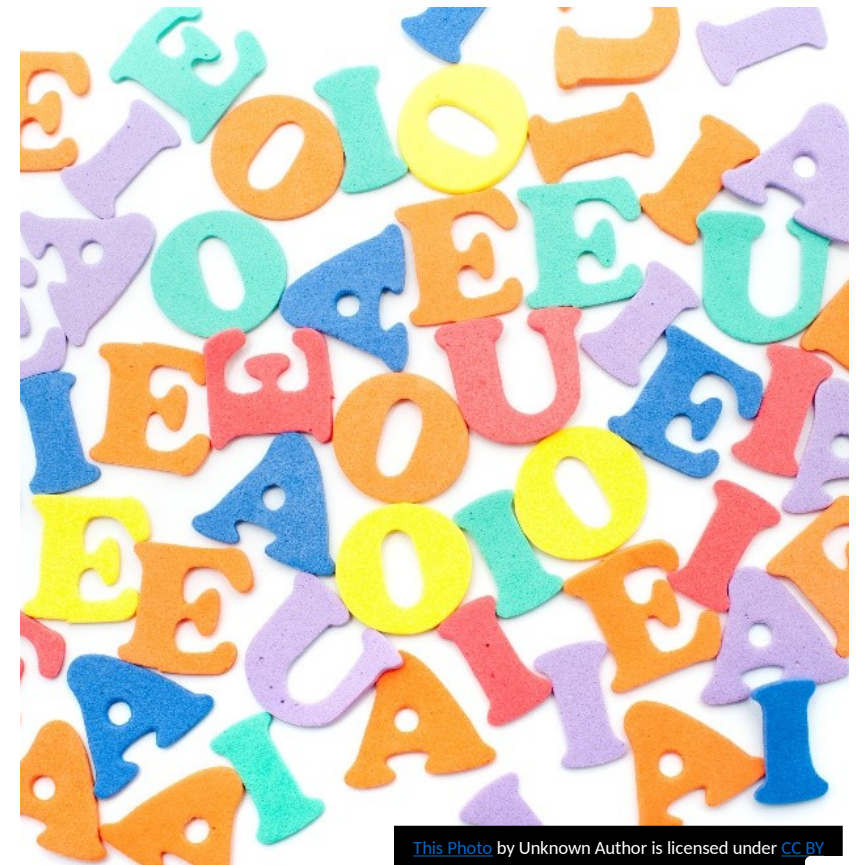
The English alphabet has just 5 letters that are used for vowels.
What are they?

English has a lot more vowel sounds than this:

bait, bet, bit, beat, bat, bot, boat, boot, but, book, bath

English uses different ways of writing these sounds, often putting two vowel letters together, to write something which is just one sound.

Different dialects of English often have different vowel sounds in the same word.



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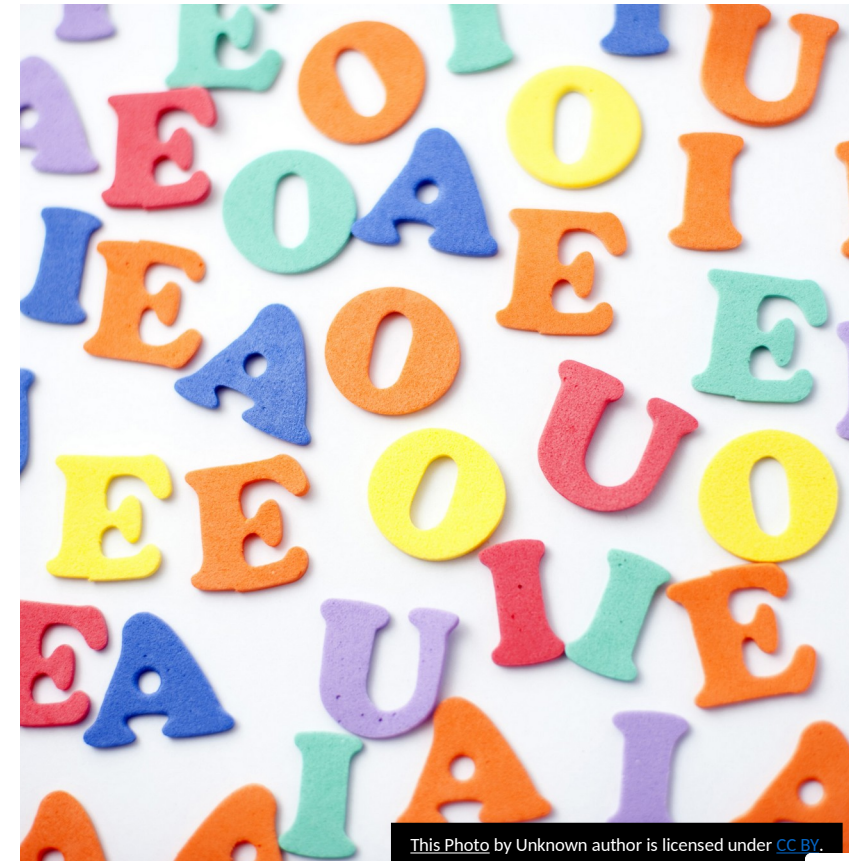
Choosing Vowels

English has a lot of vowels, but not all the possible ones.

If you know French or German, think how you pronounce *tu* in French, or *ü* (like in *schützen*) in German?

That vowel is like the *ee* sound in *see*, but with your lips rounded. Try it!

You can also do the *oo* in *soon*, but unround your lips and you get the vowel that Japanese uses in *futon*! Try it!



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DESIGN CHOICE 2

- What vowels will your language have?
- How will you write them down?
- Will you use digraphs?



Choosing Syllables

Languages put consonants and vowels together to make a syllable.

A syllable is usually a vowel with one or more consonants before it and one or more consonants after it.

A simple syllable is a consonant followed by a vowel (CV) but you can have more complex ones.

CVC = CAT

CVCC = BACK

CVCCVC = WONDER



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DESIGN CHOICE 3

Choose a syllable structure for your language.

How many consonants does it allow at the start of a syllable?

How many at the end?

What kinds of clusters of consonants are allowed? All of them? Or just very simple ones? (remember you have to pronounce the language!)

Let's make some words



1. Write down ten syllables in your language.



2. Give three of them meanings to things on your map.



3. Put some of your syllables together to make 2-syllable words.



4. Give three of these the meanings of other things on your map.



5. Now you can label the relevant items on your map with your new words.



Congratulations: you've begun to invent a language!



Make up five new words, following the choices you've made for sounds and syllables. Keep them hidden. You can give them meanings if you like, but you don't have to.



Find a partner, and say your words to your partner without showing them those words. Your partner has to write them down.



Did your partner write down the words right? Did you pronounce them right? What went wrong, if anything?

A final challenge...

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