Article Talk

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H

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This article is about the letter of the alphabet. For other uses, see H (disambiguation).
"Aitch" redirects here. For the surname, see Aitch (surname). For the community in the United States, see Aitch, Pennsylvania.

H (named *aitch* /eɪtʃ/ or, regionally, *haitch* /heɪtʃ/, plural *aitches*)[1][2] is the eighth letter in the ISO basic Latin alphabet.

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Hh Hh
ISO basic Latin alphabet

Aa	Bb	Cc	Dd
Ee	Ff	Gg	**Hh**
Ii	Jj	Kk	Ll
Mm	Nn	Oo	Pp
Qq	Rr	Ss	Tt
Uu	Vv	Ww	Xx
Yy	Zz		

v · t · e

H
H h
(See below)

Usage	
Writing system	Latin script
Type	Alphabetic
Language of origin	Latin language
Phonetic usage	[h]
	[x]
	[ħ]
	[ɦ]
	[ɥ]
	[ʜ]
	[ʔ]
	[◌ʰ]
	[ç]
	/heɪtʃ/
Unicode value	U+0048, U+0068
Alphabetical position	8

History	
Development	
	□
	𓉹
	𐤇
	Ⅲ
	□
	日
	H
	日H⊦
	H η
	🄰🄰
	H h
Time period	~-700 to present

History

Egyptian hieroglyph fence	Old Semitic ħ	Phoenician *heth*	Greek *heta*	Etruscan H I	Latin H
𓏛	Ⅲ	日	日 H 日H	日	H

The original Semitic letter Heth most likely represented the voiceless pharyngeal fricative (ħ). The form of the letter probably stood for a fence or posts.

The Greek eta 'H' in Archaic Greek alphabets still represented /h/ (later on it came to represent a long vowel, /ɛː/). In this context, the letter eta is also known as heta to underline this fact. Thus, in the Old Italic alphabets, the letter heta of the Euboean alphabet was adopted with its original sound value /h/.

While Etruscan and Latin had /h/ as a phoneme, almost all Romance languages lost the sound—Romanian later re-borrowed the /h/ phoneme from its neighbouring Slavic languages, and Spanish developed a secondary /h/ from /f/, before losing it again; various Spanish dialects have developed [h] as an allophone of /s/ or /x/ in most Spanish-speaking countries, and various dialects of

Portuguese use it as an allophone of /ʀ/. 'H' is also used in many spelling systems in digraphs and trigraphs, such as 'ch', which represents /tʃ/ in Spanish, Galician, Old Portuguese and English, /ʃ/ in French and modern Portuguese, /k/ in Italian, French and English, /x/ in German, Czech, Polish, Slovak, one native word of English and a few loanwords into English, and /ç/ in German.

Name in English

For most English speakers, the name for the letter is pronounced as /eɪtʃ/ and spelled "aitch"[1] or occasionally "eitch". The pronunciation /heɪtʃ/ and the associated spelling "haitch" is often considered to be h-adding and is considered nonstandard in England.[3] It is, however, a feature of Hiberno-English.[4]

The perceived name of the letter affects the choice of indefinite article before initialisms beginning with H: for example "an H-bomb" or "a H-bomb". The pronunciation /heɪtʃ/ may be a hypercorrection formed by analogy with the names of the other letters of the alphabet, most of which include the sound they represent.[5]

The *haitch* pronunciation of *h* has spread in England, being used by approximately 24% of English people born since 1982,[6] and polls continue to show this pronunciation becoming more common among younger native speakers. Despite this increasing number, the pronunciation without the /h/ sound is still considered to be standard in England, although the pronunciation with /h/ is also attested as a legitimate variant.[3]

Authorities disagree about the history of the letter's name. The *Oxford English Dictionary* says the original name of the letter was [ˈaha] in Latin; this became [ˈaka] in Vulgar Latin, passed into English via Old French [atʃ], and by Middle English was pronounced [aːtʃ]. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* derives it from French *hache* from Latin *haca* or *hic*. Anatoly Liberman suggests a conflation of two obsolete orderings of the alphabet, one with *H* immediately followed by *K* and the other without any *K*: reciting the former's *..., H, K, L,...* as [...(h)a ka el ...] when reinterpreted for the latter *..., H, L,...* would imply a pronunciation [(h)a ka] for *H*.[7]

Use in writing systems

English

In English, ⟨h⟩ occurs as a single-letter grapheme (being either silent or representing the voiceless glottal fricative (/h/) and in various digraphs, such as ⟨ch⟩ /tʃ/, /ʃ/, /k/, or /x/), ⟨gh⟩ (silent, /g/, /k/, /p/, or /f/), ⟨ph⟩ (/f/), ⟨rh⟩ (/r/), ⟨sh⟩ (/ʃ/), ⟨th⟩ (/θ/ or /ð/), ⟨wh⟩ (/hw/[8]). The letter is silent in a syllable rime, as in *ah*, *ohm*, *dahlia*, *cheetah*, *pooh-poohed*, as well as in certain other words (mostly of French origin) such as *hour*, *honest*, *herb* (in American but not British English) and *vehicle*. Initial /h/ is often not pronounced in the weak form of some function words including *had*, *has*, *have*, *he*, *her*, *him*, *his*, and in some varieties of English (including most regional dialects of England and Wales) it is often omitted in all words (see ⟨h⟩-dropping). It was formerly common for *an* rather than *a* to be used as the indefinite article before a word beginning with /h/ in an unstressed syllable, as in "an historian", but use of *a* is now more usual (see English articles § Indefinite article).

Other languages

In the German language, the name of the letter is pronounced /haː/. Following a vowel, it often silently indicates that the vowel is long: In the word *erhöhen* ('heighten'), the second ⟨h⟩ is mute for most speakers outside of Switzerland. In 1901, a spelling reform eliminated the silent ⟨h⟩ in nearly all instances of ⟨th⟩ in native German words such as *thun* ('to do') or *Thür* ('door'). It has been left unchanged in words derived from Greek, such as *Theater* ('theater') and *Thron* ('throne'), which continue to be spelled with ⟨th⟩ even after the last German spelling reform.

In Spanish and Portuguese, ⟨h⟩ ("hache" in Spanish, pronounced Spanish pronunciation: [ˈatʃe], or *agá* in Portuguese, pronounced [aˈɣa] or [ɐˈga]) is a silent letter with no pronunciation, as in *hijo* [ˈixo] ('son') and *húngaro* [ˈũɡaɾu] ('Hungarian'). The spelling reflects an earlier pronunciation of the sound /h/. It is sometimes pronounced with the value [h], in some regions of Andalusia, Extremadura, Canarias, Cantabria and the Americas in the

Descendants	· Ħ
	· Ҥ
	· Ⱨ
	· ꜧ
	· ʰ
	· ɦ
	· ħ
	· Ⱨ
Sisters	ħ
	ҳ
	Π
	ح
	⁇
	ה
	ه
	⁇
	ᚼ
	⁇
	⁇
	🔤 🔤
	🔤 🔤
	ረ ሪ
	8
Variations	(See below)
Other	
Other letters commonly used with	h(x), ch, gh, nh, ph, sh, fh, th, wh, (x)h
This article contains **IPA** phonetic symbols. Without proper rendering support, you may see question marks, boxes, or other symbols instead of Unicode characters. For an introductory guide on IPA symbols, see Help:IPA.	

beginning of some words. ⟨h⟩ also appears in the digraph ⟨ch⟩, which represents /tʃ/ in Spanish and northern Portugal, and /ʃ/ in oral traditions that merged both sounds (the latter originally represented by ⟨x⟩ instead) e.g. in most of the Portuguese language and some Spanish-speaking places, prominently Chile, as well as ⟨nh⟩ /ɲ/ and ⟨lh⟩ /ʎ/ in Portuguese, whose spelling is inherited from Occitan.

In French, the name of the letter is pronounced /aʃ/. The French orthography classifies words that begin with this letter in two ways, one of which can affect the pronunciation, even though it is a silent letter either way. The *H muet*, or "mute" ⟨h⟩, is considered as though the letter were not there at all, so for example the singular definite article *le* or *la*, which is elided to *l'* before a vowel, elides before an *H muet* followed by a vowel. For example, *le + hébergement* becomes *l'hébergement* ('the accommodation'). The other kind of ⟨h⟩ is called *h aspiré* ("aspirated '⟨h⟩'", though it is not normally aspirated phonetically), and does not allow elision or liaison. For example in *le homard* ('the lobster') the article *le* remains unelided, and may be separated from the noun with a bit of a glottal stop. Most words that begin with an *H muet* come from Latin (*honneur*, *homme*) or from Greek through Latin (*hécatombe*), whereas most words beginning with an *H aspiré* come from Germanic (*harpe*, *hareng*) or non-Indo-European languages (*harem*, *hamac*, *haricot*); in some cases, an orthographic ⟨h⟩ was added to disambiguate the [v] and semivowel [ɥ] pronunciations before the introduction of the distinction between the letters ⟨v⟩ and ⟨u⟩: *huit* (from *uit*, ultimately from Latin *octo*), *huître* (from *uistre*, ultimately from Greek through Latin *ostrea*).

In Italian, ⟨h⟩ has no phonological value. Its most important uses are in the digraphs 'ch' /k/ and 'gh' /g/, as well as to differentiate the spellings of certain short words that are homophones, for example some present tense forms of the verb *avere* ('to have') (such as *hanno*, 'they have', vs. *anno*, 'year'), and in short interjections (*oh*, *ehi*).

Some languages, including Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, and Finnish, use ⟨h⟩ as a **breathy voiced** glottal fricative [ɦ], often as an allophone of otherwise voiceless /h/ in a voiced environment.

In Hungarian, the letter has five independent pronunciations, perhaps more than in any other language, with an additional three uses as a productive and non-productive member of a digraph. H may represent /h/ as in the name of the Székely town Hargita; intervocalically it represents /ɦ/ as in "tehéz"; it represents /x/ in the word "doh"; it represents /ç/ in "ihlet"; and it is silent in "Cseh". As part of a diphthong, it represents, in archaic spelling, /t͡ʃ/ with the letter C as in the name "Széchényi; it represents, again, with the letter C, /x/ in "pech" (which is pronounced [pɛx]); in certain environments it breaks palatalization of a consonant, as in the name "Horthy" which is pronounced [hɔrti] (without the intervening H, the name "Horty" would be pronounced [hɔrc]); and finally, it acts as a silent component of a diphthong, as in the name "Vargha", pronounced [vɒrgɒ].

In Ukrainian and Belarusian, when written in the Latin alphabet, ⟨h⟩ is also commonly used for /ɦ/, which is otherwise written with the Cyrillic letter ⟨г⟩.

In Irish, ⟨h⟩ is not considered an independent letter, except for a very few non-native words, however ⟨h⟩ placed after a consonant is known as a "séimhiú" and indicates lenition of that consonant; ⟨h⟩ began to replace the original form of a séimhiú, a dot placed above the consonant, after the introduction of typewriters.

In most dialects of Polish, both ⟨h⟩ and the digraph ⟨ch⟩ always represent /x/.

In Basque, during the 20th century it was not used in the orthography of the Basque dialects in Spain but it marked an aspiration in the North-Eastern dialects. During the standardization of Basque in the 1970s, the compromise was reached that *h* would be accepted if it were the first consonant in a syllable. Hence, *herri* ("people") and *etorri* ("to come") were accepted instead of *erri* (Biscayan) and *ethorri* (Souletin). Speakers could pronounce the h or not. For the dialects lacking the aspiration, this meant a complication added to the standardized spelling.

Other systems

As a phonetic symbol in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), it is used mainly for the so-called aspirations (fricative or trills), and variations of the plain letter are used to represent two sounds: the lowercase form ⟨h⟩ represents the voiceless glottal fricative, and the small capital form ⟨ʜ⟩ represents the voiceless epiglottal fricative (or trill). With a bar, minuscule ⟨ħ⟩ is used for a voiceless pharyngeal fricative. Specific to the IPA, a hooked ⟨ɦ⟩ is used for a voiced glottal fricative, and a superscript ⟨ʰ⟩ is used to represent aspiration.

Related characters

Descendants and related characters in the Latin alphabet

- H with diacritics: Ĥ ĥ Ȟ ȟ Ħ ħ Ḩ ḩ Ⱨ ⱨ ḫ ḫ Ḥ ḥ Ḣ ḣ Ḧ ḧ Ḫ ḫ ⟨?⟩
- IPA-specific symbols related to H: ʜ Ħ ɦ ʰ ʰ ɥ ᶣ[9]
- ᴴ : Modifier letter H is used in the Uralic Phonetic Alphabet[10]
- ⟨?⟩ : Subscript small h was used in the Uralic Phonetic Alphabet prior to its formal standardization in 1902[11]

- ʰ : Modifier letter small h is used in Indo-European studies[12]
- ꜧ and ꜧ : Turned H with fishhook and turned H with fishhook and tail are used in Sino-Tibetanist linguistics [13]
- Ƕ ƕ : Latin letter hwair, derived from a ligature of the digraph hv, and used to transliterate the Gothic letter 𐍈 𐍈 (which represented the sound [hʷ])
- Ⱶ ⱶ : Claudian letters[14]

Ancestors, siblings and descendants in other alphabets

- 𐤇 𐤇 : Semitic letter Heth, from which the following symbols derive
  - Η η : Greek letter Eta, from which the following symbols derive
    - 𐌇 𐌇 : Old Italic H, the ancestor of modern Latin H
      - ᚺ, ᚻ : Runic letter haglaz, which is probably a descendant of Old Italic H
  - Һ һ : Cyrillic letter Shha, which derives from Latin H
  - 𐌷 𐌷 : Gothic letter haal

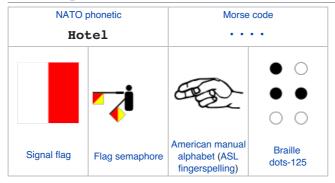### Derived signs, symbols and abbreviations

- h : Planck constant
- $\hbar$: reduced Planck constant
- ℍ: Double-struck capital H

Computing codes

Character	H		h	
Unicode name	latin capital letter h		latin small letter h	
Encodings	decimal	hex	decimal	hex
Unicode	72	U+0048	104	U+0068
UTF-8	72	48	104	68
Numeric character reference	H	H	h	h
EBCDIC family	200	C8	136	88
ASCII [1]	72	48	104	68

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

Other representations

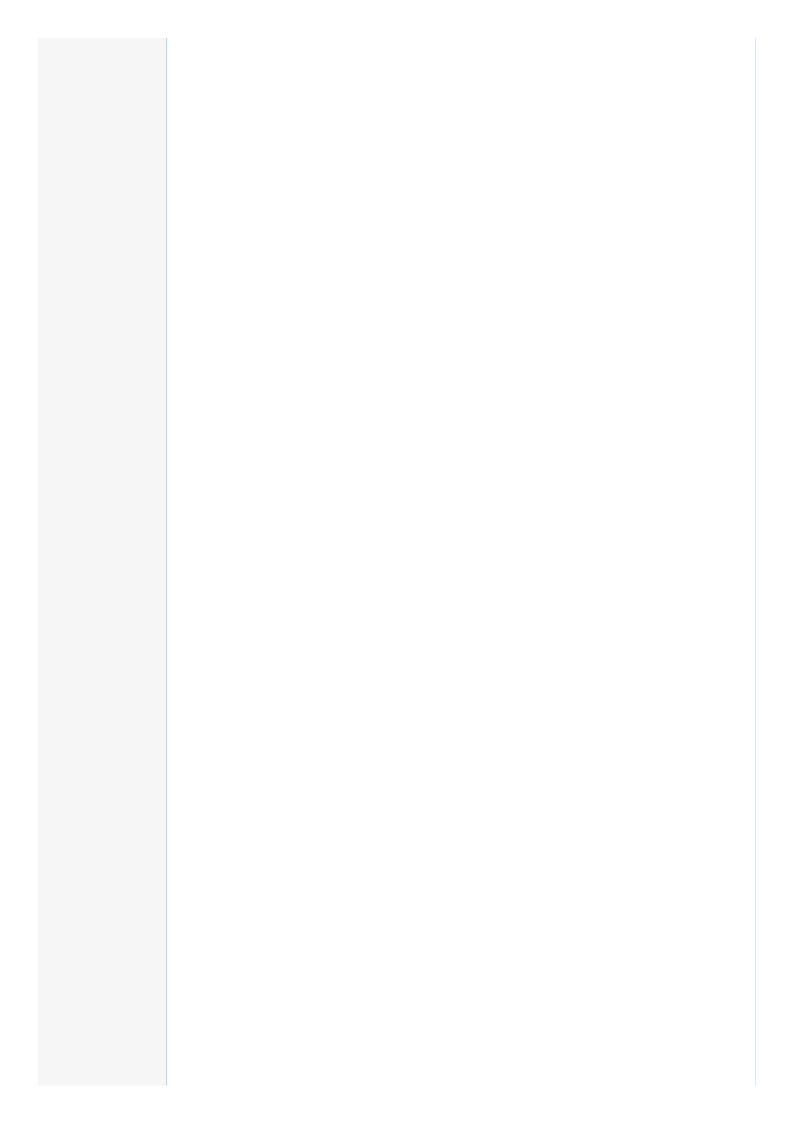| NATO phonetic	Morse code
Hotel	· · · ·
Signal flag	Flag semaphore	American manual alphabet (ASL fingerspelling)	Braille dots-125

See also

- American Sign Language grammar
- List of hieroglyphs/H

References

1. ^ *a* *b* "H" *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edition (1989); *Merriam-Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged* (1993); "aitch" or "haitch", op. cit.
2. ^ "the definition of h" . *Dictionary.com*. Retrieved 28 September 2017.
3. ^ *a* *b* "'Haitch' or 'aitch'? How do you pronounce 'H'?" . BBC News. Retrieved 3 September 2016.
4. ^ Dolan, T. P. (1 January 2004). "A Dictionary of Hiberno-English: The Irish Use of English" . Gill & Macmillan Ltd. Retrieved 3 September 2016 – via Google Books.

5. ^ Todd, L. & Hancock I.: "International English Ipod", page 254. Routledge, 1990.
6. ^ John C. Wells, *Longman Pronunciation Dictionary*, page 360, Pearson, Harlow, 2008
7. ^ Liberman, Anatoly (7 August 2013). "Alphabet soup, part 2: H and Y" 🗗. *Oxford Etymologist*. Oxford University Press. Retrieved 3 October 2013.
8. ^ In many dialects, /hw/ and /w/ have merged
9. ^ Constable, Peter (2004-04-19). "L2/04-132 Proposal to add additional phonetic characters to the UCS" 📄 (PDF).
10. ^ Everson, Michael; et al. (2002-03-20). "L2/02-141: Uralic Phonetic Alphabet characters for the UCS" 📄 (PDF).
11. ^ Ruppel, Klaas; Aalto, Tero; Everson, Michael (2009-01-27). "L2/09-028: Proposal to encode additional characters for the Uralic Phonetic Alphabet" 📄 (PDF).
12. ^ Anderson, Deborah; Everson, Michael (2004-06-07). "L2/04-191: Proposal to encode six Indo-Europeanist phonetic characters in the UCS" 📄 (PDF).
13. ^ Cook, Richard; Everson, Michael (2001-09-20). "L2/01-347: Proposal to add six phonetic characters to the UCS" 📄 (PDF).
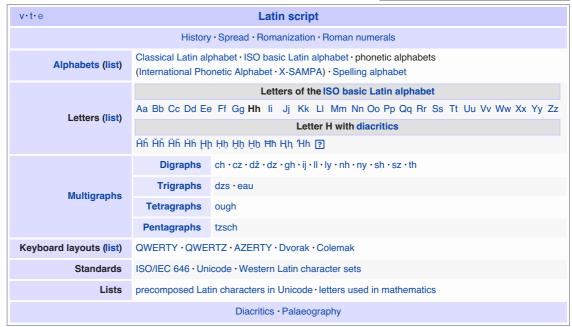14. ^ Everson, Michael (2005-08-12). "L2/05-193R2: Proposal to add Claudian Latin letters to the UCS" 📄 (PDF).

External links

- 🔣 The dictionary definition of *H* at Wiktionary
- 🔣 The dictionary definition of *h* at Wiktionary
- Lubliner, Coby. 2008. "The Story of H." 🔗 (essay on origins and uses of the letter "h")

Wikisource has the text of the 1911 *Encyclopædia Britannica* article *H*.

Wikimedia Commons has media related to *H*.

v · t · e	Latin script		
	History · Spread · Romanization · Roman numerals		
Alphabets (list)	Classical Latin alphabet · ISO basic Latin alphabet · phonetic alphabets (International Phonetic Alphabet · X-SAMPA) · Spelling alphabet		
Letters (list)	**Letters of the ISO basic Latin alphabet**		
	Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg **Hh** Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz		
	Letter H with diacritics		
	Ĥĥ Ȟȟ Ḧḧ Ḣḣ Ḩḩ Ḥḥ Ḫḫ Ħħ H̱ẖ Ⱨⱨ [?]		
Multigraphs	**Digraphs**	ch · cz · dž · dz · gh · ij · ll · ly · nh · ny · sh · sz · th	
	Trigraphs	dzs · eau	
	Tetragraphs	ough	
	Pentagraphs	tzsch	
Keyboard layouts (list)	QWERTY · QWERTZ · AZERTY · Dvorak · Colemak		
Standards	ISO/IEC 646 · Unicode · Western Latin character sets		
Lists	precomposed Latin characters in Unicode · letters used in mathematics		
	Diacritics · Palaeography		

Categories: Graphemes | ISO basic Latin letters

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