

Guide to the
Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians

Miwok Alphabet

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The Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians Tribal Council has adopted the following 20-letter alphabet for writing Miwok. This alphabet is “phonetic” – each letter has a consistent and unique pronunciation. You do not need to memorize special rules for the pronunciation of individual letters in different words.

’ a c e h i † k l m n ŋ o p s t ʈ u w y

The purpose of this booklet is to teach you to read this alphabet, so that you can read and write Northern Sierra Miwok.

Vowels

- a pronounced like “a” in *father*
- e pronounced like “e” in *get*
- i pronounced like “i” in *sit*
- † pronounced like “oo” in *loot*; keep your lips relaxed
- o pronounced like “o” in *core*
- u pronounced like “oo” in *boom*; keep your lips rounded

Consonants

- ’ pronounced as a catch in your throat, like you feel in the middle of *uh-oh*
- c ... pronounced like “ch” in *chip*, or sometimes like “j” in *jump* when it occurs between two vowels
- h pronounced like “h” in *home*
- k pronounced like “k” in *kick*, or sometimes like “g” in *get* when it occurs between two vowels
- l pronounced like “l” in *ladder*

- m ... pronounced like “m” in *man*
- n pronounced like “n” in *nope*
- ŋ pronounced like “ng” in *sing*
- p pronounced like “p” in *piece*, or sometimes like “b” in *boy* when it occurs between two vowels
- s pronounced like “s” in *snake*, or sometimes like “z” in *zoo* when it occurs between two vowels or after “ ’ ”
- t pronounced like “t” in *stop*, or sometimes like “d” in *dog* when it occurs between two vowels
- ʈ pronounced like “t” in *stop* but with the tongue tip curled up towards the roof of the mouth; or sometimes like “d” in *dog* when it occurs between two vowels
- w ... pronounced like “w” in *win*
- y pronounced like “y” in *yes*

Some of the letters of the SSBMI Miwok Alphabet correspond to sounds that do not occur in English. For example, the letter “ʈ” is not pronounced exactly like the “t” of English. Additionally, some letters vary slightly in specific contexts. As you read our alphabet, you may find that you cannot pronounce every letter fluently at first, and that’s okay – you will get better at it with practice.

Length. Any sequence of two identical letters in a row, like “oo” or “ss”, is pronounced exactly the same as the base letter but held longer (e.g. “oo” is pronounced just like “o” but held longer).

Stress. Any vowel that is written with an acute accent “ ´ ” above it, like “á” or “úu”, is “stressed”, meaning that it is pronounced with greater emphasis than other vowels within the same word.