

Guide to the
Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians

Miwok Alphabet

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v2023-11-06



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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 “a” in *tape*
- i pronounced like “ea” in *seat*
- † pronounced like (but not the same as) the vowel in *ewww*
- o pronounced like “o” in *smoke*
- u pronounced like “oo” in *boot*

Consonants

- ’ pronounced as a pause, like 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 *top*, or sometimes like “d” in *dog* when it occurs between two vowels *
- ʈ pronounced like “t” in *top* 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*

Long Vowels and Consonants

Any sequence of two identical letters in a row, such as “aa” or “ss”, is pronounced the same as the base letter but held for longer (e.g. “aa” is pronounced longer than “a”).

Stressed Vowels

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

* You will see that we list multiple pronunciations for some letters, like “c” and “s”. This is because Miwok speakers vary in their pronunciation of these sounds when they occur in certain contexts. For example, speakers vary in pronouncing “c” when it occurs between two vowels like the “ch” in *chip* versus like the “j” in *jump*, with this difference having no bearing on word meaning in Miwok.