

ALPHABETH

There are 5 vowels and 21 consonants in the Indonesian alphabet. As well as representing individual sounds, they also combine to form other phonemes, namely *ng* [ŋ], *ny* [ɲ], *sy* [ʃ] and *kh* [x].

In addition, some of the vowels have more than one variation of sound, or allophones as they are known. For instance, the vowel *e* can be pronounced as [æ, e and ə]. Indonesian also has three diphthongs: *ai* [aj], *oi* [oj] and *au* [au].

The remainder of this section comprises a detailed explanation of how to pronounce the various sounds in the Indonesian language. Some examples are also listed alongside the explanations in order to aid your understanding of the different phonemes.

Vowels

1. *a* is pronounced [a], like *a* in *car*.

anda	[an.da]	'you'
bawa	[ba.wa]	'bring'

2. *e* has three pronunciations. They are [æ], [e] and [ə]. *e* is pronounced as [æ], like *e* in *rest*.

kakek	[ka.kæk]	'grandfather'
nenek	[næ.næk]	'grandmother'

e is pronounced [e], like *e* in *say*.

enak	[e.naʔ]	'nice'
merah	[me.rah]	'red'

e is also pronounced [ə], like *a* in *ago*.

empat	[əm.pat]	'four'
kelapa	[kə.la.pa]	'coconut'

3. **i** has two pronunciations. The first is short and is pronounced [ɪ], like *i* in *sit*. This occurs when an **i** appears between two consonants.

In other positions, **i** is pronounced [i], like *y* in *very*.

ini	[i.ni]	'this'
as i n	[a.sɪn]	'salty'

4. **o** is usually pronounced [o], like *o* in *go*.

orang	[o.rang]	'people'
kad o	[ka.do]	'gift'

o is sometimes pronounced [ɒ], like *a* in *call*.

Obrol	[ɒ.brɒl]	'chat'
Kop er	[kɒ.pər]	'suitcase'

5. **u** is pronounced [u], like *oo* in *food*.

uang	[u.waŋ]	'money'
bar u	[ba.ru]	'new'

Consonants

1. **b** is pronounced [b], like *b* in *book*.

bola	[bo.la]	'ball'
te bal	[tə.bal]	'thick'

When **b** appears in the final position, it is not aspirated.

sebab b	[sə.bap]	'cause'
bab b	[bap]	'chapter'

2. **c** is pronounced [tʃ], like *ch* in *church* with a slight aspiration.

<i>cari</i>	[tʃa.ri]	'to look for'
<i>kucing</i>	[ku.tʃiŋ]	'cat'

3. **d** is pronounced [d], like *d* in *daddy*.

<i>dorong</i>	[dɒ.rɒŋ]	'push'
<i>muda</i>	[mu.da]	'young'

4. **f** is pronounced [f], like *f* in *fat*.

<i>foto</i>	[fo.to]	'photograph'
<i>maaf</i>	[maʔ.af]	'sorry'

5. **g** is pronounced [g], like *g* in *game*.

<i>gadis</i>	[ga.dis]	'girl'
<i>bagus</i>	[ba.gus]	'good'

When *g* is in the final position, it is pronounced [k], like *k* in *back*, although this is an irregular spelling which rarely occurs.

<i>gudeg</i>	[gu.də k]	'gudeg (a kind of Javanese food)'
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6. **h** is pronounced [h], like *h* in *hill*.

<i>hujan</i>	[hu.jan]	'rain'
<i>tahu</i>	[ta.hu]	'tofu'

In some words *h* which appears between two vowels is not pronounced.

<i>ta<u>h</u>u</i>	[ta.u]	'know'
<i>ta<u>h</u>un</i>	[ta.un]	'year'

7. **j** is pronounced [dʒ], like *j* in *judge* with a slight aspiration.

j elas	[dʒə.las]	‘clear’
ker j a	[kər.dʒa]	‘work’

8. **k** is pronounced [k], like *k* in *key*.

k amar	[ka.mar]	‘room’
sak u	[sa.ku]	‘pocket’

When *k* appears in the final position, it is usually pronounced as a glottal stop.

enak k	[e.naʔ]	‘nice’
tidak k	[ti.daʔ]	‘no’

9. **l** is pronounced [l], like *l* in *long*.

lima l	[li.ma]	‘five’
gul l a	[gu.la]	‘sugar’

10. **m** is pronounced [m], like *m* in *mother*.

m andi	[man.di]	‘to take a bath’
bum i	[bu.mi]	‘earth’

11. **n** is pronounced [n], like *n* in *notice*.

n omor	[nɒ.mɒr]	‘number’
badan n	[ba.dan]	‘body’

12. **p** is pronounced [p], like *p* in *park*.

p anas	[pa.nas]	‘hot’
rapat p	[ra.pat]	‘meeting’

When *p* appears in the final position, it is not aspirated.

atap	[a.ta p]	'roof'
lembap	[lem.ba p]	'humid'

13. *q* is pronounced [k], like *k* in *kitchen*.

Al q uran	[al.kur.an]	'the Quran'
q anun	[ka.nun]	'law'

14. *r* is pronounced [r], like *r* in *road*.

r umah	[ru.mah]	'home'
pi r ing	[pi.riŋ]	'plate'

15. *s* is pronounced [s], like *s* in *sand*.

surat	[su.rat]	'letter'
pisau	[pi.saw]	'knife'

16. *t* is pronounced [t], like *t* in *time*.

t inta	[tin.ta]	'ink'
ke t at	[kə.ta t]	'tight'

When *t* appears in the final position, it is not aspirated.

ket t	[kə.ta t]	'tight'
sak t	[sa.k i t]	'sick'

17. *v* is pronounced [f], like *f* in *fog*.

var i asi	[fa.ri.a.si]	'variation'
lav a	[la.fa]	'lava'

18. **w** is pronounced [w], like *w* in *wet*.

warna	[war.na]	'colour'
tawar	[ta.war]	'bargain'

19. **x** is pronounced [s], like *s* in *class*.

xilofon	[si.lo.fon]	'xylophone'
xilograf	[si.lo.graf]	'xylograph'

20. **y** is pronounced [j], like *y* in *young*.

yakin	[ja.kin]	'sure'
ayam	[a.jam]	'chicken'

21. **z** is pronounced [z], like *z* in *zero*.

zat	[zat]	'substance'
izin	[i.zin]	'permission'

Vowel Combinations

1. **ai** is pronounced as two separate sounds in word-initial and word-medial position.

<i>air</i>	[a.ir]	'water'
<i>kain</i>	[ka.in]	'cloth'
<i>main</i>	[ma.in]	'play'

ai is pronounced as diphthong [aj] word finally, like *y* in *cry*.

pantai	[pan.taɪ]	'beach'
ramai	[ra.maɪ]	'noisy'

2. **oi** is pronounced as two separate sounds in word-medial position. *koin*
[ko.in] 'coin'

oi is pronounced as diphthong [ɔj], like *oy* in *boy* in word-final position.

amboi	[am.boɪ]	'wow'
sepoi	[se.poɪ]	'breezy'

3. **au** is pronounced as two separate sounds in separate syllable in word-medial position.

laut	[la.ut]	'sea'
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baut	[ba.ut]	'bolt'
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au is pronounced as diphthong [aw], like *ow* in *cow* in word-final position.

kemar au	[ke.ma.raw]	'dry'
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kal au	[ka.law]	'if'
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However, in some words **au** is pronounced as two separate sounds in word-final position.

bau	[ba.u]	'smell'
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mau	[ma.u]	'want'
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Reference:

Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa. 2014. *Tujuh Hari Pertama di Indonesia*. Jakarta, Indonesia.