

Transliteration Guide

This guide gives the English letter or combination of letters that can produce the equivalent (or closest possible) pronunciation of the Samskrit letters. However, there are some alphabets in the Samskrit language which do not have exact equivalent sounds in English. For such sounds, words in other languages or names of renowned persons or places are given.

In the words given for phonetic reference, the letter or combination of letters which matches with the pronunciation is in bold red. One can repeat the word several times and narrow down to the sound of alphabets in bold red to get the phonetic sound. In some places compound words or two words are given, wherein one can get the phonetic sound by coalescing or blending the sounds at the word boundaries. Due to variations in style and accent of English language spoken in different parts of the world, this guide can only give the closest possible phonetic reference. Hence the most reliable way to learn these sounds is to listen to the pronunciations by a Samskrit speaker. (Please refer to

<http://www.chitrapurmath.net/sanskrit/Varnamala/varnamala.htm>)

VOWELS

Letter	Lowercase	Uppercase	Phonetic Reference
अ	a	A	as in curl
आ	ā	Ā	as in father
इ	i	I	as in dip
ई	ī	Ī	as in feet
उ	u	U	as in push
ऊ	ū	Ū	as in tool
ऋ	ṛ	Ṛ	as in grid (guttural sound of r)
ॠ	ṝ	Ṝ	as in greed (prolongation of ṛ)
ऌ	ḷ	Ḭ	as in revelry
ॡ	ḹ	Ḭ̄	as in coral reef (prolongation of ḷ)

ए	e	E	as in they
ऐ	ai	Ai / AI	as in a yard, Jai Shankar, Chennai, Aishwarya (blending of Saṁskṛt vowel a and i with more stress on i)
ओ	o	O	as in go
औ	au	Au / AU	as in outer (blending of Saṁskṛt vowel a and u with more stress on u)
ं	m̐	Ṁ	nasal sound of m in plum . In a word it is supported by the preceding vowel.
ः	ḥ	Ḥ	sound of ha with expulsion of air. In a word the h takes the sound of the preceding vowel

CONSONANTS

Letter	Lowercase	Uppercase	Guide
क्	k	K	as in come
ख्	kh	Kh / KH	as in kh aki
ग्	g	G	as in girl
घ्	gh	Gh / GH	as in agh ast
ङ्	ṅ	Ṇ	as in mon key
च्	ch	Ch / CH	as in ch at
छ्	<u>ch</u>	<u>Ch</u> / <u>CH</u>	as in wat ch -house (with blending of ch-h)
ज्	j	J	as in j ug
झ्	jh	Jh / JH	as in hed ge hog
ञ्	ñ	Ñ	as in sing e
ट्	t	T	as in t erm
ठ्	<u>th</u>	<u>Th</u> / <u>TH</u>	as in light -h ouse (with blending of t-h)

ड्	d	D	as in d ouble
ढ्	<u>dh</u>	<u>Dh</u> / <u>DH</u>	as in ad h oc (with blending of d-h)
ण्	ṇ	N	as in un der (with the tongue rolled back touching the roof of the mouth)
त्	t	T	as in T aj Mahal, t awa in Hindi, t amales in Spanish (with the tongue pressing the back of the teeth)
थ्	th	Th / TH	as in th ird
द्	d	D	as in th at
ध्	dh	Dh / DH	as in brea th e h ard (with blending of the-h), Mad h uri, Dh oni
न्	n	N	as in n ut
प्	p	P	as in p unish
फ्	ph	Ph / PH	as in uph ill, or top h at (with blending of p-h)
ब्	b	B	as in b ell
भ्	bh	Bh / BH	as in ab hor
म्	m	M	as in m ud
य्	y	Y	as in loy al
र्	r	R	as in r un (slightly stronger than the English r, tongue presses against the roof)
ल्	l	L	as in l uck
व्	v / w	V / W	as in v erb
श्	sh	Sh / SH	as in sh irt
ष्	<u>sh</u>	<u>Sh</u> / <u>SH</u>	as in sh arp / sh ine (with a slight rolling back of the tongue)
स्	s	S	as in s un

ह	h	H	as in h ut
क्ष	ksh	Ksh / KSH	as in a ct ion
ज्ञ	jñ	Jñ / JÑ	as in can y on

ऽ	ऽ	ऽ	used for prolonging the sound of the preceding vowel
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A consonant in Saṃskṛt does not form a complete syllable by itself. Alone it is written with the ' ॑ ' sign below the alphabet in Devanāgarī script, and is pronounced as half a syllable. When followed by a vowel it is pronounced as a complete syllable.

Just like in English, in the word cat**t** you stop at the **t**, such that you almost don't hear it as there is no vowel after it. In the word cata**l**ogue the sound of **t** is heard as it is followed by a vowel. The following words will give an idea of how to pronounce the Saṃskṛt consonants with different vowels.

Letter	Lowercase	Uppercase	Guide
ह	ha	Ha / HA	as in h urt
हा	hā	Hā / HĀ	as in h ard
हि	hi	Hi / HI	as in h ip
ही	hī	Hī / HĪ	as in h eel
हु	hu	Hu / HU	as in h ook
हू	hū	Hū / HŪ	as in h oot
ह्र	hr̥	Hṛ / HR̥	sound of hri , as in H ritik
हे	he	He / HE	as in h ay
है	hai	Hai / HAI	as in h yena
हो	ho	Ho / HO	as in h ost
हौ	hau	Hau / HAU	as in h ouse
हं	hm̐	Ham̐ / HAM̐	as in h um