Pound sign

The **pound sign** £ is the <u>symbol</u> for the <u>pound sterling</u> – the <u>currency</u> of the <u>United Kingdom</u> and previously of <u>Great Britain</u> and of the <u>Kingdom of England</u>. The same symbol is used for other currencies called <u>pound</u>, such as the <u>Gibraltar</u>, <u>Egyptian</u>, <u>Manx</u> and <u>Syrian</u> pounds. A similar symbol £ (with two bars) was used on some banknotes from time to time, but the <u>Bank of England</u> has not done so since 1975. (This two-bar symbol is also used for currencies named *lira*, for example the (withdrawn) Italian lira.)

In Canada and the United States, "pound sign" refers to the symbol # (number sign).

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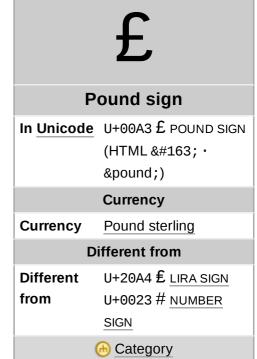
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The £ $\underline{\text{grapheme}}$ in a selection of fonts

Origin

The symbol derives from the upper case <u>Latin letter</u> <u>L</u>, representing *libra pondo*, the basic unit of weight in the <u>Roman Empire</u>, which in turn is derived from the <u>Latin</u> word, *libra*, meaning <u>scales</u> or a balance. The pound became an <u>English</u> unit of weight and in England became defined as the <u>tower pound</u> (equivalent to 350 grams) of sterling silver. [1][2] According to the Royal Mint Museum:

It is not known for certain when the horizontal line or lines, which indicate an abbreviation, first came to be drawn through the L. However, there is in the <u>Bank of England Museum</u> a cheque dated 7 January 1661 with a clearly discernible £ sign. By the time the Bank was founded in 1694 the £ sign was in common use. [3]

However, the simple letter L, in lower- or uppercase, was used to represent the pound sterling in printed books and newspapers until well into the 19th century. In the <u>blackletter</u> type used until the seventeenth century, the letter L is rendered as \mathfrak{L} .

Usage

The pound sign is placed before the number (e.g., £12,000) and $\underline{\text{separated}}$ from the following digits by no space or only a thin space.

Other English variants

Canadian English

In Canadian English the symbols $\underline{\mathfrak{E}}$ and $\underline{\#}$ are both called the pound sign, but the # is also known as the 'number sign' and as the 'noughts-and-crosses' board'. $\underline{[a][6]}$

US English

In American English, the term "pound sign" usually refers to the symbol # (number sign), and the corresponding telephone key is called the "pound key". $^{[7]}$

Historic variants

Double bar style

Banknotes issued by the <u>Bank of England</u> since 1975 have only used the single bar style as a pound sign. The Bank used both the two-bar style (£) and the one-bar style (£) (and sometimes a figure without any symbol whatever) more or less equally since 1725 until 1971, intermittently and sometimes concurrently. In typography, the symbols are allographs – style choices – when used to represent the pound; consequently fonts use U+00A3 £ POUND SIGN (Unicode) code point irrespective of which style chosen, (not U+20A4 £ LIRA SIGN despite its similarity).

Other

In the eighteenth-century <u>Caslon</u> metal fonts, the pound sign was identical to an italic uppercase J, rotated 180 degrees. [10]

Currencies that use the pound sign

United Kingdom: Pound sterling

■ Egypt: Egyptian pound

Syria: Syrian pound

Sudan: Sudanese pound

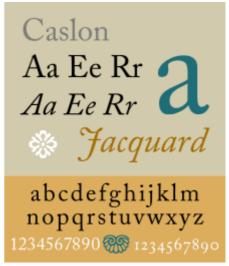
South Sudan: South Sudanese pound

Gibraltar: Gibraltar poundJersey: Jersey pound

Guernsey: <u>Guernsey pound</u>Isle of Man: Manx pound

■ St Helena: Saint Helena pound

• Falkland Islands: Falkland Islands pound



Note the leading J of Jacquard

Code points

In the $\underline{\text{Unicode}}$ standard, the symbol £ is called POUND SIGN, and the symbol £ is the LIRA SIGN. These have respective code points:

- U+00A3 £ POUND SIGN (HTML £ ·£ ·inherited from Latin-1)[11]
- U+20A4 £ LIRA SIGN (HTML ₤)[12]

Unicode notes that the "lira sign" is not widely used and was added due to both it and the pound sign being available on HP printers, and also states that the preferred sign for lira is the pound sign. [13]

The encoding of the £ symbol in position xA3 was first standardised by <u>ISO Latin-1</u> in 1985. Position xA3 was used by the <u>Digital Equipment Corporation</u> <u>VT220</u> terminal, <u>Mac OS Roman</u>, the <u>Amstrad CPC</u>, the <u>Commodore Amiga</u> and the <u>Acorn Archimedes</u>.

Many early computers (limited to a 7-bit, 128-position <u>character set</u>) used a variant of <u>ASCII</u> with one of the less-frequently used characters replaced by the £. The UK national variant of <u>ISO 646</u> was standardised as BS 4730 in 1985. This code was identical to ASCII except for two characters: x23 encoded £ instead of #, while x7E encoded instead of ~. <u>MSDOS</u> on the <u>IBM PC</u> originally used a non-standard 8-bit character set <u>Code page 437</u> in which the £ symbol was encoded as x9C; adoption of ISO character codes only came later with <u>Microsoft Windows</u>. The <u>Atari ST</u> also used position x9C. The <u>HP Laserjet</u> used position xBA for the £ symbol, while most other printers used x9C. The BBC <u>Ceefax</u> system which dated from 1976 encoded the £ as x23. The <u>ZX Spectrum</u> and the <u>BBC Micro</u> used x60 (grave). The <u>Commodore 64</u> used x5C while the <u>Oric used x5F</u> <u>IBM's EBCDIC</u> code page 037 uses xB1 for the £ while its code page 285 uses x5B. <u>ICL's 1900-series</u> mainframes used a six-bit (64-position character set) encoding for characters, loosely based on BS 4730, with the £ symbol represented as <u>octal 23</u> (hex 13, dec 19).

Entry methods

Typewriters

<u>Typewriters</u> produced for the British market included a "£" sign from the earliest days, though its position varied widely. A 1921 advertisement for an <u>Imperial Typewriters</u> model D, for example shows a machine with two modifier shifts (CAPS and FIG), with the "£" sign occupying the FIG shift position on the key for letter "B". But the advertisement notes that "We make special keyboards containing symbols, fractions, signs, etc., for the peculiar needs of Engineers, Builders, Architects, Chemists, Scientists, etc., or any staple trade."

On Latin-alphabet <u>typewriters</u> lacking a "£" symbol type element, a reasonable approximation could be made by typing an "f" over an "L".

Compose key

The compose key sequence is: [15]

■ Compose + L + -

Windows, Linux, Unix

On <u>Microsoft Windows</u>, <u>Linux</u> and <u>Unix</u>, the <u>UK keyboard layout</u> has the "£" symbol on the 3 number key and is typed using:

■ 1 Shift + 3

On a <u>US-International</u> keyboard in Windows, <u>[16]</u> the "£" can be entered using:

- 1 Shift + AltGr + 4
- 1 Shift + Ctrl + Alt + 4 (on older keyboards without an AltGr key)

On a US-International keyboard in Linux and Unix, the "£" can be entered using:

- Ctrl + î Shift + U followed by a 3
 î Shift + AltGr + 3
- In Windows, it can also be generated through the <u>Alt keycodes</u>, although the results vary depending on factors such as the locale, codepage and OS version:
 - Alt +0 1 6 3 (keeping Alt pressed until all 4 digits have been typed on the <u>numeric keypad</u> only)
 - Alt +1 5 6 (this also works in MS-DOS)

The <u>Character Map</u> utility and <u>Microsoft Word</u>'s *Insert Symbol* commands may also be used to enter this character. [b]

MacOS

The symbol "£" is in the $\underline{\text{MacRoman}}$ character set and can be generated on most non-UK $\underline{\text{Mac OS}}$ keyboard layouts which do not have a dedicated key for it, typically through:

■ <u>C Option</u>+3

On UK Apple Mac keyboards, this is reversed, with the "£" symbol on the number 3 key, typed using:

■ Î Shift +3 (and the number sign "#" generated by _ Option +3)

Android

Pressing and holding the local currency sign will invoke a pop-up box presenting an array of currency signs, from which the pound sign may be chosen. [17]

Other uses

The logo of the <u>UK Independence Party</u>, a British <u>political party</u>, is based on the pound sign, [18] symbolising the party's opposition to adoption of the <u>euro</u> and to the <u>European Union</u> generally.

A symbol that appears to be a double-barred pound sign is used as the logo of the British record label Parlophone. In fact this is a stylised version of a blackletter L (\mathfrak{L}), standing for Lindström (the firm's founder Carl Lindström).

The pound sign was used as an uppercase letter (the lowercase being ① signifying [3] in the early 1993–1995 version of the Turkmen Latin alphabet. [19]

See also

- Latin letter L with stroke Ł ł
- Semuncia £
- Category:Currency symbols

Notes

- a. "Noughts-and-crosses" is another name for the game called "Tic-tac-toe" in American English.
- b. Be careful not to choose the similar € as this will produce a lira sign, which has a different code point.

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