

Quick guide to IPA

[International Phonetic Alphabet]

English sounds

<u>Symbol(s)</u>	<u>Sounds like</u>	<u>Comments</u>
[æ]	a in “bat” or “cat”	
[ɑ]	a in “father” or o in “nod”	
[e]	a in “made” or ai in “wait”	“closed e”
[ɛ]	e in “bed” or “met”	“open e”
[ə]	e in “hidden” or o in “pardon”	unaccented, called “schwa”
[i]	ee in “need” or i in “pizza”	
[ɪ]	i in “bid” or “window”	
[o]	o in “hope” or oa in “road”	“closed o”
[ɔ]	aw in “saw” or “gnawed”	“open o”
[u]	u in “rude” or oo in “food”	
[ʊ]	oo in “wood” or u in “put”	
[ʌ]	u in “cup” or “sud”	
[b]	b in “bother”	
[d]	d in “dude”	
[f]	f in “face” or ph in “phat”	
[g]	g in “go” or “guts”	“hard g”
[dʒ]	j in “jest” or g in “genuine”	“soft g” (more about ʒ later)
[h]	h in “howdy” or “hey”	
[j]	y in “yes”	note that y is not the symbol!
[k]	c in “corn”, k in “kill”, or q in “queen”	
[l]	l in “lobby”	
[ɫ]	first sound in properly pronounced “lute”	like [ɫj] - think “ <u>all</u> you can eat”
[m]	m in “miss”	
[n]	n in “nose”	
[ŋ]	ng in “ping”	one sound = one symbol
[p]	p in “palate”	
[r]	r in “rose”	
[s]	s in “sell” or c in “cell”	
[ʃ]	sh in “shush”	
[t]	t in “tell”	
[tʃ]	ch in “chime”	
[ð]	th in “this”	(voiced th)
[θ]	th in “thin”	(unvoiced th)
[v]	v in “very”	
[w]	w in “will” or u in “queen”	(like [u], but fluid)
[z]	z in “zap”	
[ʒ]	s in “measure” or “asian”	

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Page 2 - FRENCH

French sounds not found in English

<u>Symbol(s)</u>	<u>Sounds like</u>	<u>Examples</u>
[ɑ]	more open than a in “bat” or “cat”	carafe [karaf]
[y]	lips rounded for [u] and tongue forward for [i]	lune [lyn]
[ø]	lips rounded for [o] and tongue forward for [e]	feu [fø]
[œ]	lips rounded for [ɔ] and tongue forward for [ɛ]	leur [lœr]
[ã]	like a in “father”, but nasal (soft palate down)	en [ã]
[õ]	like aw in “paw”, but more closed and nasal	on [õ]
[ɛ̃]	like e in “red”, but nasal	vin [vɛ̃]
[œ̃]	the vowel [œ], but nasal	un [œ̃]
[ɥ]	the vowel [y], but glided (as [w] is to [u])	nuit [nuɥi]
[ʁ]	like ni in “onion” or ny in “Anya”	agneau [ɑno]
[r]	same symbol as english, but different sound In spoken French, it is a fricative sound at the back of the hard palate In sung French, it is rolled or flipped, unless a casual effect is desired	

Other French differences:

French is generally spoken and sung without much word stress.

French is generally spoken and sung with considerable legato.

If you want to accent a word, put weight on the unaccented syllable.

Final consonants are rarely pronounced BUT

They are often pronounced when the following word begins with a vowel

This is called liason, or in English, elision.

There are no hard and fast rules for when this occurs.

Final e is rarely pronounced when spoken BUT

It is usually pronounced as [ə] when sung, but never accented.

A regular dictionary will not show this in its IPA transcriptions.

(You have to know.)

French [ɔ] is pronounced more towards [ʊ] than in English.

Plosive consonants like p, b, t, d, and k are less explosive in French.

(less air escapes at the end of the consonant.)

Nasal vowels should not be TOO nasal.

There is currently an excellent introduction to French pronunciation with audio examples at:

<http://www.languageguide.org/francais/grammar/pronunciation/>

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Page 3 - German and Italian

German sounds not found in French or English

<u>Symbol(s)</u>	<u>Sounds like</u>	<u>Examples</u>
[ʏ]	lips rounded for [ʊ] and tongue forward for [ɪ]	müssen [mʏsən]
[ç]	make the mouth shape for [i] then blow air through it	ich [ɪç]
[x]	sounds like hocking a loogie made with tongue against back of hard palate	auch [aux]
[r]	same symbol as english, but different sound In spoken German, it is usually a fluttery sound made with the tongue and the soft palate in the back of the mouth (though sometimes and in some regions more forward.) In sung German, it is usually rolled, flipped, or omitted. r at the end of a syllable is often unpronounced in colloquial speech. it can be appropriate to leave these unpronounced in singing as well. (As one might find in a Brooklyn accent...)	

Other German differences:

Like English, much of the emotion of the language is in the consonants.

It is often good to accent a word by prolonging its consonant instead of singing it louder.

Double consonants are often lengthened, though not as much as in Italian.

eg: “bitten” as compared to Italian “fato” and “fatto”.

Words beginning with a vowel generally must begin with a gentle glottal.

[ɪ] is often modified towards [i] when singing.

Do not modify too far! You can change the meaning of the words.

Overmodification of [ɪ] is a very common mistake in American singers singing German

Italian sounds not found in German, French or English

None! (sort of...)

Some thoughts on Italian diction:

While we have already covered all the sounds, they sometimes occur in strange contexts.

Most of us are not familiar with the [ʎ] sound, as in “gli occhi”. May be written [lj].

Double consonants are literally doubled when sung.

They are often held for half the value of the note.

ch is pronounced [k], while c followed by e or i is pronounced [tʃ] (opposite of English)

Usually, the emotion is highlighted through the vowels, not consonants.

Be careful about diphthongs!!! Really!!!

See the quick guide to Italian diction for more things to watch out for