

English Spelling and Sound Correspondences

The following lists are representative of the more common ways (and some less common ways) of spelling each sound. They are by no means exhaustive, but they should enable the user who is uncertain of the spelling to find most words in this book. In actual practice, knowing the first five letters of almost any word will get the user to within a few inches of the right place in even the largest unabridged dictionaries.

In these lists, ways of spelling each sound are indicated by boldface letters. Some words may be pronounced in more than one way; any such words on these lists are printed in italics if the relevant portion of the spelling is affected. The pronunciation transcription at the entry for the word will show the variation. If there is no letter in a word representative of a sound heard in that word, the word is given following a dash at the end of the appropriate section, with the pronunciation given in full as in the last two entries at \e\:

Ð chasm \ˈkaz-**e**m\

Ð McCoy \me-ˈkoʧi\

If it is difficult to tell which letter or letters stand for a particular sound in a word, that word appears at the end of the appropriate section, with the pronunciation given in full as in the last entry at \ch\:

nature \ˈnaʦ-ch **e**r\

Vowels and Diphthongs

\ e \	a	abut
	e	silent
	i	maritime
	o	connect
	u	circus
	y	physician

ah	veranda
ai	<i>captain</i>
ea	ocean
ei	mullein
eo	luncheon
ia	collegiate
io	fashion
oa	<i>waistcoat</i>
oe	Phoenician
oi	porpoise
ou	famous
ow	<i>pillowcase</i>
ue	guerilla
eau	bureaucrat
Ð	chasm \'kaz- e m\
Ð	McCoy \me-\'koÇi\

\ 'e, ,e \	a	was
	o	above
	u	humdrum
	y	<i>Cymric</i>
	oe	does
	oo	flood
	ou	rough

\ er \ar		liar
	er	batter
	ir	elixir
	or	honor
	re	ogre
	ur	injurer
	yr	martyr

eur *chauffeur*

our glamour

\ 'er \ **er** fern, *were*

ir bird

or world

ur fur

yr myrtle

ear earth

err *err*

eur *chauffeur*

irr *squirrel*

our journal

urr hurry

yr rh myrrh

colonel \ 'kern-el \

\ a \

a	mat, <i>calf</i>
e	<i>there</i>
i	meringue
ae	aerial
ai	plaid, <i>air</i>
au	<i>aunt</i>
ay	<i>prayer</i>
ea	<i>bear</i>
ei	<i>their</i>
	<i>chert</i> \'chert, 'chat\

\ aÅ \

a	fade
e	melee
ae	maelstrom
ai	main, straight

ao	gaol
au	gauge
ay	day
ea	steak
ee	matinee
ei	vein, reign, weigh
ey	prey
ie	<i>lingerie</i>
ui	Uitlander

\ aÈ \	b	farther, <i>father</i> , guard
	e	entree, sergeant
	i	<i>lingerie</i>
	o	cot
	aa	bazaar
	ah	shah

au *nautical*
ea heart
ou *nought*
eau bureaucracy
 patois \ 'pa-twaÈ, 'paÈ-\

\ aÇ \ **a** *father, calf*
 ar *cart* (in the speech of so-called *r-droppers*)
 au *aunt*
 aar *bazaar* (in the speech of so-called *r-droppers*)

\ auÇ \ **au** sauerkraut
 ou loud, bough
 ow now
 aou caoutchouc

\ e \	a	any
	e	bet, <i>err</i> , guess
	i	<i>vanilla</i>
	u	bury
	ae	aesthetic, <i>aerial</i>
	ai	said, <i>air</i>
	ay	says, <i>prayer</i>
	ea	bread, <i>bear</i>
	ei	heifer, <i>their</i>
	eo	leopard
	ie	friend
	oe	<i>foetid</i>
	ieu	<i>lieutenant</i>
	Ð	mbira \em-'bir-e\

\ eÅ \	e	me
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i	ski
y	pretty
ae	aeon
ay	<i>Monday, quay</i>
ea	easy
ee	see, beet
ei	receive
eo	people
ey	key
ie	grief
oe	phoebe, <i>foetid</i> shillelagh, shillalah \she-'laÅ-leÅ\ <i>chamois</i> \'sham-eÅ, <i>also</i> sham-'waÈ\

a	homage, <i>catercorner</i>
e	England, <i>pretty</i> , serious

\ i \

i	tip
o	women
u	busy
y	myth
ea	hear
ee	<i>been</i> , beer, <i>creek</i>
ei	counterfeit, weird
ia	carriage
ie	sieve
ui	building

\ ðÅ \

i	fine, sigh, guide
y	sly
ai	aisle, <i>aioli</i>
ay	bayou, papaya
ei	heist, height

ey	geyser
ie	lie
oy	coyote
uy	buy
ye	dye
aye	<i>aye</i>
eye	eye
	choir \ˈkwɔɪ(-e)r\

\ ɔɪ \	a	<i>quahog, cupola</i>
	o	bone, folk
	ao	pharoah
	au	chauvinist
	eo	yeoman
	ew	sew
	oa	coat

oe doe
oh oh, Noh
oo *brooch*
ou boulder, though
ow know
ua *quahog*
eau plateau

Ð burgh \ 'ber-(,)oÅ, 'be-(,)roÅ \
 ewe \ 'yuÈ, 'yoÅ \

\ oÇ \
a ball, talk
o soft
ah *Utah*
au sausage, caught
aw saw
eo Georgian

oa	broad
ou	cough, thought
ow	toward

\ oÇi \	aw	<i>lawyer</i>
	eu	Freudian
	oi	coin
	oy	boy
	uoy	buoy
		sawing \ 'soÇ(-)in \

\ uÈ \	o	do, move, two
	u	flu
	w	crwth, cwm
	eu	rheumatism, maneuver
	ew	crew

oe	shoe
oo	school
ou	youth
ue	blue
ui	cruise
eeu	<i>leeward</i>
ieu	<i>lieutenant</i>
oeu	manoeuvre
	beauty \ˈbyuÈt-e\
	ewe \ˈyuÈ, ˈyoÅ \
	peewit \ˈpeÅ-wit, ˈpyuÈ-et\

\ uÇ \	o	woman, wolf
	u	pull
	oo	wood
	ou	<i>could</i>

Consonants

\ b \	b	baby
	v	<i>government, seven</i>
	bb	rubber
	bh	bhang
	pb	cupboard, raspberry

\ ch \ c		cello
	ch	chin
	cz	Czech
	si	tension
	te	righteous
	ti	question
	tch	match
	nature	\'naÅ-cher\'

\ d \

d did

dd ladder

dh dhow

ed seemed

ld would

(In the speech of most Americans **t** and **tt** between vowels are pronounced the same as **d** and **dd**).

\ f \

f fan, safe

ff offer

gh laugh

lf calf

ph telephone

Ð *lieutenant* \luÈ-'ten-ent,
Brit le(f)-'ten-\

\ g \
g go
gg egg
gh ghost
gu guide, plague
example \ig-'zam-pel\

\ h \
g Gila monster
h hat
j jai alai
ch *Chanukah*
wh who

\ hw \
ju *marijuana, San Juan*
wh *whale, when*

\ j \	g	gem
	j	joy
	ch	<i>Greenwich</i>
	dg	budget, bridge
	di	soldier
	dj	adjective
	gg	exaggerate
	gi	region
	jj	hajj
		graduation \,graj-e-'waÅ-shen\

\ k \	c	catch
	k	kid, take
	q	quit
	cc	account
	ch	chaos, <i>loch</i> , <i>schism</i>

ck	pick
cq	acquire
cu	biscuit
gh	<i>lough</i>
kh	khaki
kk	chukka, pukka
lk	talk
qu	liquor, plaque, quay
cch	saccharine
cqu	lacquer
	tax \ 'taks \

\ k _ \ h	<i>Hanukkah, Hasid</i>
ch	<i>loch, Chasid</i>
gh	<i>lough</i>

\ l \	l	low, sale
	ll	filling, faille
	lh	Lhasa apso
	ln	<i>kiln</i>

\ eɪ \	l	dirndl
	al	pedal
	el	betel
	le	battle
	yl	phenyl

\ m \	m	me, come
	gm	phlegm
	lm	<i>calm</i>
	mb	comb
	mh	mho

mm dummy

mn autumn

chm drachm

\^em \ **en** *open, happen*

ain *captain*

ernm *government*

\ n \ **n** no, alone

gn sign, gnat, reign

kn knot

mn mnemonic

mp *comptroller*

nn banner

pn pneumonia

\ e n \	en	sudden
	on	cotton
	ain	certain
\ n \	n	ink, finger, <i>orangutan</i>
	nd	handkerchief
	ng	sing, singer
	ngg	mah-jongg
	ngu	harangue
\ p \	p	port, stop, ape
	ph	shepherd, <i>diphthong</i>
	pp	supper
\ r \	r	red, care, card, car
		(Many people usually, some people occasionally,

do not pronounce **r** followed by a consonant or pause)

rh rhyme

rr merry

wr write

rrh diarrhea

colonel \kɜrn-^el\

\ s \

c proceed, race

s say, loose

z pretzel

ps psalm

sc fascinate, scissors

ss mass

st listen, Christmas

ts *tsar*

tz *tzar*

sch *schism*
sth isthmus
tax \ 'taks \

\ sh \ **c** oceanic
s sugar, sure
ch machine
ci special
sc fascism
se *nauseous*
sh shy
si emulsion
sk *ski*
ss tissue
ti nation
chi marchioness

psh	pshaw
sch	schist
sci	conscious
ssi	mission
chsi	fuchsia

\ t \

t	tea, eat, late
bt	debt
ct	ctenoid
ed	walked
pt	ptomaine, receipt
th	thyme, Thomas, Thai
tt	button
cht	yacht
ght	night, straight
phth	phthisic

\ th \

gh *trough*
th thin, breath
ght *drought*
chth chthonic
phth phthalein

\ _t_h \

dd eisteddfod
dh edh
th this, teething, breathe

\ v \

f of
v very, save
w wedeln
ph Stephen
vv savvy

\ w \

u persuade, quit
w way
ju *San Juan, marijuana*
ou ouabain, *bivouac*
wh *whale, when*
Ð one \ 'wen\
choir \ 'kwɔ̃(-e)r\
patois \ 'pa-,twaÈ, 'paÈ\
strenuous \ 'stren-ye-wes\

\ y \

i opinion
j hallelujah
y yard
beauty \ 'byuÈt-eÅ\
canÄon \ 'kan-yen\

cute \ˈkyuːt\
feud \ˈfyuːd\
few \ˈfyuː\
strenuous \ˈstren-ye-wes\
tortilla \toʧr-ˈteɪ-(y)e\
unit \ˈyuː-nɪt\

\ z \

s	days, was, please
x	xylophone, <i>bateaux</i>
z	zone, haze
cz	czar
sc	<i>discern</i>
ss	scissors
ts	<i>tsar</i>
tz	<i>tzar</i>
zz	buzz

example \ig-'zam-pel\

\ zh \	g	regime, beige
	j	jongleur
	si	vision
	zi	glazier
	ssi	<i>fission</i>
		azure \ 'azh-er \
		measure \ 'mezh-er, 'maʔzh-\

Silent Letters

The following letters often appear in the spelling but with no corresponding sound in the pronunciation of some words. Perhaps every letter of the alphabet is ``silent" (by which we really mean ``unpronounced") in some English word or other. For instance, *nc* is not pronounced in *blancmange*. Many such uncommon or rare instances are not included in this list.

b	comb, debt
c	Connecticut, ctenoid
ch	yacht, chthonic
e	date, live, battle, seemed, plague
g	gnat, sign, diaphragm
gh	night, straight, though, thought
h	hour, honor, rhyme, thyme
i	business, <i>parliament</i>
k	knot, know
l	talk, folk, would, <i>calm</i>
m	mnemonic
n	autumn, <i>government</i> , <i>kiln</i>
o	sophomore, <i>opossum</i>
p	cupboard, pneumonia, psalm, ptomaine, raspberry
ph	phthalein, phthisic

r	surprise \se(r)-'prɔ̃z\ (Many people usually, most people occasionally, do not pronounce r when followed by a consonant or pause.)
s	aisle, island, patois, demesne
t	beret, boatswain, Christmas, depot, listen
th	asthma, isthmus, <i>northeaster</i>
u	biscuit, build, guest, <i>pursuivant</i> , quay
ue	plague, plaque
w	who, write, two, sword, boatswain
x	faux pas, <i>bateaux</i>
y	<i>yeast</i>
z	rendezvous