

Apalachee Pronunciation and Spelling Guide

Welcome to our Apalachee alphabet page! The [Apalachee](#) language has not been spoken for centuries, and the vocabulary lists on our website come from 17th-century Spanish records. The orthography, therefore, resembles Spanish more than English or linguistic notation. Here is a general pronunciation guide:

🌀 Apalachee Vowels

<u>Character</u> <u>We Use:</u>	<u>Sometimes</u> <u>Also Used:</u>	<u>IPA</u> <u>symbol:</u>	<u>Apalachee pronunciation:</u>
a		a	Like the <i>a</i> in <i>father</i> .
i		I ~ i	Like the <i>i</i> in <i>pit</i> or the <i>i</i> in <i>police</i> .
o		o ~ ʊ	Like the <i>o</i> in <i>note</i> or the <i>u</i> in <i>put</i> .

🌀 Apalachee Consonants

<u>Character</u> <u>We Use:</u>	<u>Sometimes</u> <u>Also Used:</u>	<u>IPA</u> <u>Symbol</u> <u>mb</u> <u>ol:</u>	<u>Apalachee pronunciation:</u>
b	v, u	b	Like <i>b</i> in <i>bill</i> .
c	k, qu, q, g	k ^h	Like <i>k</i> in <i>kite</i> .
ch	c, č	tʃ	Like <i>ch</i> in <i>chair</i> .
f		f ~ φ	Like the <i>f</i> in English <i>fair</i> . It was probably originally pronounced bilabially, without touching the upper teeth to the lower lip.
gu	w	w	Like <i>w</i> in <i>way</i> .
h	g	h	Like <i>h</i> in English <i>hay</i> .
l		l	Like <i>l</i> in <i>light</i> .
lz	ł, lh, hl	ł	This sound is a lateral fricative that doesn't really exist in English. It sounds like the "ll" in the Welsh name "Llewellyn." Some English speakers can pronounce it well if they try to pronounce the "breathy l" in the word <i>clue</i> without the <i>c</i> in front of it.

m		m	Like <i>m</i> in <i>moon</i> .
n		n	Like <i>n</i> in <i>night</i> .
p		p ^h	Like <i>p</i> in <i>pie</i> .
s		s	Like <i>s</i> in <i>sing</i> .
t		t ^h	Like <i>t</i> in <i>tie</i> .
y	i	j	Like <i>y</i> in <i>yes</i> .

Apalachee Long Vowels

Like other Muskogean languages, Apalachee had a distinction between long and short vowels (a long vowel was simply held longer than a short one, without the quality of the vowel changing.) However, the Spanish orthography used to record the language failed to note this distinction. Linguists can make good guesses as to which vowels were long and which were short based on other, closely related Muskogean languages, and you will sometimes see Apalachee long vowels marked with a colon to show their length (i.e. *to:lo*, "two," which was only recorded as *tolo* by the Spanish.)

Choctaw Vowels

<u>Character We Use:</u>	<u>Sometimes Also Used:</u>	<u>IPA symbol:</u>	<u>Choctaw pronunciation:</u>
a	á, ā, aa	aː	Like the <i>a</i> in <i>father</i> , only held longer.
<u>a</u>	an, ạ, ã	ã	Like <i>a</i> only pronounced nasally. In English, it slightly resembles the <i>on</i> in <i>conch</i> .
e	í, ī, i, ii	iː	Like the <i>i</i> in <i>police</i> , only held longer.
i		I ~ i	Like the <i>i</i> in <i>pit</i> or the <i>i</i> in <i>police</i> .
<u>i</u>	in, ị, ï	ĩ ~ ã	Like <i>e</i> or <i>i</i> only pronounced nasally. In English, it slightly resembles the <i>in</i> in <i>winks</i> or the <i>een</i> in <i>teensy</i> .
o	ó, ō, oo	oː	Like the <i>o</i> in <i>note</i> , only held longer.
<u>o</u>	on, ọ, õ	õ	Like <i>o</i> only pronounced nasally. In English, it slightly resembles the <i>on</i> in <i>don't</i> .
u	o, oo	o ~ u	Like the <i>o</i> in <i>note</i> or the <i>u</i> in <i>put</i> .
v	v, v, a, a	ʌ	Like the <i>u</i> in <i>cup</i> .

Choctaw Diphthongs

<u>Character We Use:</u>	<u>Sometimes Also Used:</u>	<u>IPA symbol:</u>	<u>Choctaw pronunciation:</u>
au	aw, ao	aw	Like <i>ow</i> in English <i>cow</i> .
ai	ay	aj	Like English <i>eye</i> .

Choctaw Consonants

<u>Character We Use:</u>	<u>Sometimes Also Used:</u>	<u>IPA symbol:</u>	<u>Choctaw pronunciation:</u>
b		b	Like <i>b</i> in <i>bill</i> .
ch	č, c	tʃ	Like <i>ch</i> in <i>chair</i> .
f		f	Like <i>f</i> in English <i>far</i> .

h		h	Like <i>h</i> in English <i>hay</i> .
k		k ^h	Like <i>k</i> in <i>kite</i> .
l		l	Like <i>l</i> in <i>light</i> .
lh	hl, l̥	ɬ	This sound is a lateral fricative that doesn't really exist in English. It sounds like the "ll" in the Welsh name "Llewellyn." Some English speakers can pronounce it well if they try to pronounce the "breathy l" in the word <i>clue</i> without the <i>c</i> in front of it.
m		m	Like <i>m</i> in <i>moon</i> .
n		n	Like <i>n</i> in <i>night</i> .
p		p ^h	Like <i>p</i> in <i>pie</i> .
s		s	Like <i>s</i> in <i>sing</i> .
sh	š	ʃ	Like <i>sh</i> in <i>shy</i> .
t		t ^h	Like <i>t</i> in <i>tie</i> (see Voicing, below).
w		w	Like <i>w</i> in <i>way</i> .
y		j	Like <i>y</i> in <i>yes</i> .
'	?, h	ʔ	A pause sound, like the one in the middle of the word "uh-oh."

Choctaw Double Consonants

When a Choctaw word is spelled with double letters, like *issi* (deer) or *hattak* (man), the consonant must be pronounced with double length. For an English speaker, the easiest way to pronounce a consonant with double length is to imagine a word break between the two consonants. The **s** sounds in "dress suit" are pronounced like the ones in *issi*, and the **t** sounds in "night-time" are pronounced like the ones in *hattak*.

Choctaw Tense and Lax Vowels

The short vowels **i** and **u** have two different possible pronunciations. In a syllable that does not end with a consonant (an open syllable), they are usually pronounced *tense*, like the *i* in *police* or the *o* in *note*. But in a syllable that does end with a consonant (a closed syllable), they are usually pronounced *lax*, like the *i* in *pin* or the *u* in *put*.

So **nih**i, "seed," is usually pronounced [nihi], while **nishkin**, "eye," is usually pronounced [nishkin].

A Spelling Ambiguity

The letter "v" is commonly used in Southeast Native American languages to represent a short "u" sound. This is a spelling convention that came from English missionaries, who wanted to make a distinction between the "u" sound in "put" and the "u" sound in "putt." So they used an English "u" for the vowel in "put," and a Greek "u," υ, for the vowel in "putt." Most English speakers don't know Greek as well as those missionaries did, so it's been converted to a "v" over time.

However, the missionaries left a spelling quirk behind that can make learning to pronounce Choctaw more difficult. They consistently spelled a letter "v" as an "a" at the end of a word and sometimes at the beginning of a word. That's because in English, the letter "a" is almost always pronounced "uh" at the end of a word (think of names such as Sara, Nora, Sasha, etc.) and often at the beginning of a word (above, around, again, etc.)

That means when you see a Choctaw word that ends in the letter "a," you have no way of knowing whether it really ends in **a** or in **v**. For example, the Choctaw word for water, "oka," is actually pronounced "okv." But the word for lake, "okhata," truly is pronounced "okhata."

You need to remember the pronunciation of a Choctaw word that ends in "a" yourself, just as you need to remember that the vowels in English words like "cow," "now," "low" and "tow" do not all sound the same when you pronounce them.

Choctaw Stress

Choctaw has less pronounced word stress than English does. In English, unstressed vowels are often weakened to schwas, which makes the stress sound very strong. (An example of this is the word "rebel." When "rebel" is a noun, the stress is on the first syllable and the word is pronounced REH-bəl. When "rebel" is a verb, the stress is on the second syllable and the word is pronounced rə-BELL.) But in Choctaw, all vowels are pronounced fully regardless of stress. If you weaken an unstressed vowel to a schwa you will often change the meaning of the word, so be careful not to do this!

Although stress is less pronounced than it is in English, it is still present. Just like in English, there's no way to guess which syllable of a Choctaw word is stressed. You just have to learn it when you learn the word. Though it doesn't change the pronunciation of a vowel, word stress in Choctaw does have an effect on sentence rhythm.

Choctaw Rhythm

Choctaw is a very rhythmic language. This can make it tough for English speakers to learn to pronounce it properly, because the pronunciation of a word can change depending on the sentence

surrounding it. In particular, every second syllable in a phrase is generally pronounced as a "strong" or "heavy" syllable in Choctaw. If a second syllable is already "heavy"--it ends in a consonant, has a long or nasal vowel, or both--then it already fits the rhythm of the language. But if it is not, then the short vowel in that syllable (*v*, *i*, or *u*) is naturally lengthened to a long vowel (*a*, *e*, and *o*).

So although *lusa* is the general Choctaw word for "black" and is pronounced [los^Λ] in isolation, "black wolf" is *nashoba losa* in Choctaw, pronounced [n^Λʃo:b^Λ lo:s^Λ]. Or *nita*, which means "bear" in Choctaw, is pronounced [nit^Λ], but "one bear," *nita achvffa*, is pronounced /nita: ^Λtʃ^Λff^Λ/. (With the "heavy" syllables marked in blue, those two phrases are **nashoba losa** and **nita achvffa**.)

If you've ever seen the same Choctaw word written with two different spellings (like *lusa* and *losa*) or described with two different pronunciations (like *nee-tuh* and *nee-tah*), this is probably why. It's impossible to know what the exact pronunciation of most Choctaw words will be without knowing what sentence you're going to be using it in.

Miccosukee Vowels

<u>Character We Use:</u>	<u>Sometimes Also Used:</u>	<u>IPA symbol:</u>	<u>Miccosukee pronunciation:</u>
a		a	Like the <i>a</i> in <i>father</i> .
a:	aa, a·	aː	Like the <i>a</i> in <i>father</i> , only held longer.
i		i	Like the <i>i</i> in <i>police</i> .
i:	ii, i·	iː	Like the <i>i</i> in <i>police</i> , only held longer.
o		o	Like the <i>o</i> in <i>note</i> .
o:	oo, o·	oː	Like the <i>o</i> in <i>note</i> , only held longer.

Miccosukee Nasal Vowels

Nasal vowels don't really exist in English, but you may be familiar with them from French (or from hearing people speak English with a French accent.) They are pronounced just like oral ("regular") vowels, only using your nose as well as your mouth. To English speakers, a nasal vowel often sounds like a vowel with a half-pronounced "n" at the end of it. You can hear examples of nasal vowels at the end of the French words "bon" and "Jean," or in the middle of the word "Français."

<u>Character We Use:</u>	<u>Sometimes Also Used:</u>	<u>IPA symbol:</u>
ą	ã, a ⁿ , an	ã
į	ĩ, i ⁿ , in	ĩ
Ų	õ, o ⁿ , on	õ

Miccosukee Consonants

<u>Character We Use:</u>	<u>Sometimes Also Used:</u>	<u>IPA symbol:</u>	<u>Miccosukee pronunciation:</u>
b		b	Like <i>b</i> in <i>bill</i> .
c	ch, č	tʃ ~ ts	Like <i>ch</i> in <i>chair</i> .
f		f	Like <i>f</i> as in <i>fair</i> .
h		h	Like <i>h</i> in English <i>hay</i> .
k		k ^h	Like <i>k</i> in <i>kite</i> .
l		l	Like <i>l</i> in <i>light</i> .
lh	ł, hl	ł	This sound is a lateral fricative that doesn't really exist in English. The Miccosukee pronunciation sounds like the "ll" in the Welsh name "Llewellyn." Some English speakers can pronounce it well if they try to pronounce the "breathy l" in the word <i>clue</i> without the <i>c</i> in front of it.
m		m	Like <i>m</i> in <i>moon</i> .
n		n	Like <i>n</i> in <i>night</i> .
p		p ^h	Like <i>p</i> in <i>pie</i> .
s	š, sh	ʃ	Like <i>sh</i> in <i>show</i> .
t		t ^h	Like <i>t</i> in <i>tie</i> .
w		w	Like <i>w</i> in <i>way</i> .
y	i	j	Like <i>y</i> in <i>yes</i> .

Muskogee Vowels

<u>Character We Use:</u>	<u>Sometimes Also Used:</u>	<u>IPA symbol:</u>	<u>Muskogee pronunciation:</u>
a	a:, ā	a ~ aː	Like the <i>a</i> in <i>father</i> . It is sometimes, but not always, lengthened.
e	i	ɪ ~ ɛ	Like the <i>i</i> in <i>pit</i> . Some speakers pronounce it more like the <i>e</i> in <i>pet</i> . Since many Creek speakers use the letter <i>e</i> to represent both short and long <i>e</i> (instead of using the <i>ē</i> character below), be aware that Creek words written with this letter may sometimes be pronounced with an <i>e</i> as in <i>Pete</i> instead.
ē	e, ē, i, i:	i ~ iː	Like the <i>e</i> in <i>Pete</i> . It is sometimes, but not always, lengthened.
i	ae, æ, ai, ii, e	ej ~ e	Like the <i>ai</i> in <i>bait</i> . In the past, this sound was more commonly pronounced like the <i>i</i> in <i>bite</i> , but few if any speakers pronounce it that way anymore.
o	o:, ō, ω	o ~ oː	Like the <i>o</i> in <i>note</i> . It is sometimes, but not always, lengthened.
u	o, oo	ʊ	Like the <i>u</i> in <i>put</i> .
ue	oe, œ	oj ~ wi	Like the <i>oy</i> in <i>boy</i> or the <i>wee</i> in <i>weed</i> .
v	a, v	ʌ	Like the <i>u</i> in <i>cup</i> .

Muskogee Consonants

<u>Character We Use:</u>	<u>Sometimes Also Used:</u>	<u>IPA symbol:</u>	<u>Muskogee pronunciation:</u>
c	ch, č	tʃ ~ dʒ	Like <i>ch</i> in <i>char</i> or <i>j</i> in <i>jar</i> .
f		ɸ ~ β	A bilabial fricative, like an English "f" or "v" sound but pronounced without touching the upper teeth to the lower lip. The Spanish "v" and the Japanese "f" sound like this Creek sound.
h		h	Like <i>h</i> in English <i>hay</i> .
k		k	Like the unaspirated <i>k</i> in <i>sky</i> .
l		l	Like <i>l</i> in <i>light</i> .
m		m	Like <i>m</i> in <i>moon</i> .

n		n	Like <i>n</i> in <i>night</i> .
p		p	Like the unaspirated <i>p</i> in <i>spin</i> .
r	hl, th, l	ɺ	This sound is a lateral fricative that doesn't really exist in English. It sounds like the "ll" in the Welsh name "Llewellyn." Some English speakers can pronounce it well if they try to pronounce the "breathy l" in the word <i>clue</i> without the <i>c</i> in front of it.
s		s~š~z	Like <i>s</i> in <i>sue</i> . Sometimes it sounds more <i>sh</i> in <i>shoe</i> or <i>z</i> in <i>zoo</i> .
t		t	Like the the unaspirated <i>t</i> in <i>star</i> .
w		w	Like <i>w</i> in <i>way</i> .
y		j	Like <i>y</i> in <i>yes</i> .

Muskogee Double Consonants

When a Muskogee word is spelled with double letters, like *esse* (hair) or *cetto* (snake), the consonant must be pronounced with double length. For an English speaker, the easiest way to pronounce a consonant with double length is to imagine a word break between the two consonants. The **s** sounds in "dress suit" are pronounced like the ones in *esse*, and the **t** sounds in "night-time" are pronounced like the ones in *cetto*.

Timucua Vowels

<u>Character We Use:</u>	<u>Sometimes Also Used:</u>	<u>IPA symbol:</u>	<u>Timucua pronunciation:</u>
a		a	Like the <i>a</i> in <i>father</i> .
e		e	Like the <i>e</i> sound in Spanish, similar to the <i>a</i> in <i>gate</i> .
i	y	i	Like the <i>i</i> in <i>police</i> .
o		o	Like <i>o</i> in <i>note</i> .
u	v	u	Like the <i>u</i> in <i>flute</i> .

Timucua Consonants

<u>Character We Use:</u>	<u>Sometimes Also Used:</u>	<u>IPA symbol:</u>	<u>Timucua pronunciation:</u>
b	v, gu, hu	β ~ w	Pronunciation unclear, probably like the bilabial <i>v</i> sound in Spanish words like <i>navidad</i> . May have been pronounced like <i>w</i> in <i>way</i> in some cases.
c	q, k, qu	k	Hard <i>c</i> as in <i>cold</i> . As in Spanish, this letter appears only before the vowels <i>a</i> , <i>o</i> , and <i>u</i> . When a hard <i>c</i> sound appears before <i>e</i> or <i>i</i> in a Timucua word, it was spelled with a <i>q</i> instead.
ch	č	tʃ	Like <i>ch</i> in <i>chair</i> .
f	h, b	Φ	Pronunciation unclear, probably like the bilabial <i>f</i> sound used in Japanese (pronounced by narrowing your lips and blowing through them, as if you were playing a flute.)
h	j, g	h	Like <i>h</i> in <i>hay</i> .
l		l	Like <i>l</i> in <i>light</i> .
m		m	Like <i>m</i> in <i>moon</i> .

n		n	Like <i>n</i> in <i>night</i> .
p		p	Like <i>p</i> in <i>pin</i> .
q	c, k, qu	k	Hard <i>c</i> as in <i>cold</i> . This letter is only written before the vowels <i>e</i> or <i>i</i> . As in Spanish, the letter <i>c</i> was used to represent the same sound before the vowels <i>a</i> , <i>o</i> , and <i>u</i> .
qu	cu	k ^w	Like the <i>qu</i> in <i>queen</i> .
r		rr	Like the <i>r</i> in Spanish <i>pero</i> , somewhat like the <i>tt</i> in American English <i>butter</i> .
s	c, ç	s	Like the <i>s</i> in <i>sun</i> .
t	d	t ~ d	Like <i>t</i> in <i>tie</i> . After <i>n</i> it was pronounced like the <i>d</i> in <i>die</i> .
y	i	j	Like <i>y</i> in <i>yes</i> .