

O'odham Alphabet Pronunciation Guide

The O'odham Piipaash Language Program uses a modified version of the Alvarez-Hale Orthography (Alphabet) developed by Dr. Albert Alvarez (Tohono O'odham) and Dr. Kenneth Hale.

- This modified version of the Alvarez/Hale alphabet uses twenty-one consonants and five vowels. Other symbols are used to determine the length of the vowel. (The following letters are not used: f, q, r, v, x, & z).
- To accomodate local dialect these symbols were added to the Alvarez/Hale alphabet: d & v.
- The location of stress within a word - the stress on most O'odham words is consistently in initial position, first syllable.*
- The glottal stop (') is a sound produced by a stoppage of air in the throat and is also found in certain expressions in English. For example, "oh-oh", as in "oh-oh, I think we're in trouble!"*
- The vowel sounds in O'odham can be drawn out to a long sound or cut off as a short sound. The sound of a long or short vowel does not change – it is simply held for a longer or shorter duration.*
 - A colon (:) marks the long vowels following the letter. The long vowels can appear in any syllable of a word.
 - The short vowels are marked by a breve (˘) over the letter. Short vowels, which are almost whispered usually occur at the end of a word.
- Plurals are created by reduplication of a singular word: reduplication of the first consonant and vowel, or just the initial vowel. (Example: gogs - gogogs or mi:tol - mimi:tol).*
- Used in lower case, o'odham refers simply to people, and in upper case, O'odham refers to speakers of the O'odham language.*

**Zepeda, Ophelia. "The Papago Grammar."*

CONSONANTS

| Letter | Sound | O'odham | Milga:n |
|--------|-------------|----------|-------------|
| b | big | ban | coyote |
| c | chip | cehia | little girl |
| d | this | do'ag | mountain |
| ḍ | but | taḍ | foot |
| d | dam | judum | bear |
| g | go | gogs | dog |
| h | hot | hu:ñ | corn |
| j | job | ju:kĩ | rain |
| k | kiss | ka:lit | wagon |
| l | rolling "l" | lial | money |
| m | miss | mi:tol | cat |
| n | no | nalaş | orange |
| ñ | canyon | ñu:laş | peach |
| p | pot | pi:laş | pear |
| s | see | sişpakuḍ | safety pin |
| ş | ship | şu:şk | shoes |
| t | thin | taş | sun |
| v | vine | violi:n | violin |
| w | what | wuihioşa | face |
| y | yes | ya:vĩ | key |

VOWELS

| Letter | Sound | O'odham | Milga:n |
|--------|---------|---------|-----------|
| a | father | ba'ag | eagle |
| e | earth | 'eldagĭ | skin/hide |
| i | machine | 'ispul | spur |
| o | all | 'oks | old woman |
| u | brute | 'uvĭ | woman |

LONG VOWELS

| Letter | O'odham | Milga:n |
|--------|---------|--------------|
| a: | ma:gina | machine |
| e: | 'e:'eḏ | blood |
| i: | i:bhai | prickly pear |
| o: | 'o:b | Apaches |
| u: | 'u:s | wood |

SHORT VOWELS

A few words use vowels that have a symbol above them called a breve. A vowel with a breve above it is only found at the end of words and can be difficult to hear. It may simply sound like an aspiration.

| Letter | Sound | O'odham | Milga:n |
|--------|---------------|---------|---------|
| ĭ | an aspiration | svegĭ | red |

DIPHTHONGS

A diphthong refers to two adjacent vowel sounds occurring within the same syllable.

| Letter | Sound | O'odham | Milga:n |
|--------|-------|---------|-----------------------------|
| ai | aisle | vainom | knife, object made of metal |
| ei | gooey | 'i gei | fell down |
| oi | poi | ṣoiga | rattlesnake |
| ui | oui | kui | mesquite tree |