

Sanskrit Alphabet

Vowels

	guttural		palatal		labial		cerebral		dental	
Simple short / long	अ a	आ ā	इ i	ई ī	उ u	ऊ ū	ऋ ṛ	ॠ ṝ	ऌ ḷ	ॡ ḹ

Diphthonge Long	ए e	ऐ ai	ओ o	औ au
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Anusvara „air flow through nostrils“	अं/añ/añ/aṃ
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Visārga Eg: aḥ = aha	ḥ
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Consonants

	hard (voiceless)		soft (voiced)				
	simple	aspirate	simple	aspirate	nasal	semi-vowels	sibilants
guttural	क ka	ख kha	ग ga	घ gha	ङ ṅa		ह ha
palatal	च ca	छ cha	ज ja	झ jha	ञ ña	य ya	श śa
cerebral	ट ṭa	ठ ṭha	ड ḍa	ढ ḍha	ण ṇa	र ra	ष ṣa
dental	त ta	थ tha	द da	ध dha	न na	ल la	स sa
labial	प pa	फ pha	ब ba	भ bha	म ma	व va	

Sanskrit Pronunciation Guide

Sanskrit's breadth of expression comes in part from using the entire mouth for pronunciation, and from elongating accented vowels. With an alphabet of 49 letters, it has several different versions of familiar sounds such as 'n' and 's', each issuing from a different part of the mouth. For this reason, diacritical marks are generally used to indicate how and where a consonant or vowel should be sounded.

<i>a</i>	pronounced like 'a' in <i>america</i>
<i>ā</i>	pronounced like 'a' in <i>barn</i>
<i>i</i>	pronounced like 'i' in <i>bit</i>
<i>ī</i>	pronounced like 'i' in <i>liter</i>
<i>u</i>	pronounced like 'u' in <i>put</i>
<i>ū</i>	pronounced like 'u' in <i>dude</i>
<i>e</i>	pronounced like 'e' in <i>grey</i>
<i>ai, ay</i>	pronounced like 'ai' in <i>aisle</i>
<i>o</i>	pronounced like 'o' in <i>over</i>
<i>au</i>	pronounced like 'ow' in <i>cow</i>
<i>ā, ī, ū, ē, āi, āu</i>	prolonged for two beats instead of one
<i>k, kh, g, gh, ṅ</i>	<i>gutturals</i> , arising from the throat
<i>c, ch, j, jh, ñ</i>	<i>palatals</i> , arising from the back of the palate
<i>ṭ, ṭh, ḍ, ḍh, ṇ</i>	<i>cerebrals</i> , with tongue touching the roof of the mouth
<i>t, th, d, dh, n</i>	<i>dentals</i> , with tongue touching the back of the teeth
<i>p, ph, b, bh, m</i>	<i>labials</i> , arising from the lips
<i>c, ch</i>	<i>palatal</i> , always pronounced like 'ch' in <i>chop</i>
<i>r</i>	<i>cerebral</i> , pronounced like 'ri' in <i>rip</i>
<i>ś</i>	<i>palatal</i> , pronounced like 'sh' in <i>shout</i>
<i>ṣ</i>	<i>cerebral</i> , pronounced like 'sh' in <i>leash</i>
<i>ñ</i>	pronounced like 'ni' in <i>onion</i>
<i>ṇ</i>	pronounced like 'n' in <i>uncle</i>
<i>jñ</i>	pronounced like 'gn' in <i>igneous</i>
<i>h alone</i>	pronounced like 'h' in <i>hot</i>
<i>ḥ</i>	a soft echo of the preceding vowel
<i>h after a consonant</i>	extra breath after the consonant (in Sanskrit there are no compound sounds like 'th' in <i>thief</i> or 'ph' in <i>phone</i>)