

Quick pronunciation guide

This guide offers quick reminders of how to pronounce each letter of the Nuuchahnulth alphabet. For more detailed explanation, please see the inside of this booklet.

a	<i>uh</i>	o	<i>aw</i>
aa	long <i>ah</i>	oo	long <i>aw</i>
c	<i>ts</i>	p	<i>p</i>
č	explosive <i>ts</i>	ḑ	explosive <i>p</i>
č̣	<i>ch</i>	q	back <i>k</i>
č̣̣	explosive <i>ch</i>	q ^w	rounded back <i>k</i>
e	like in <i>get</i>	s	<i>s</i>
ee	like in <i>get</i> , and long	š	<i>sh</i>
h	<i>h</i>	t	<i>t</i>
ḥ	raspy <i>h</i>	ṭ	explosive <i>t</i>
i	like in <i>bit</i>	u	like in <i>put</i>
ii	like in <i>ski</i> , and long	uu	like in <i>due</i> , and long
k	<i>k</i>	w	<i>w</i>
k ^w	rounded <i>k</i>	ẉ	<i>w</i> with a catch
ḳ	explosive <i>k</i>	x	hissed <i>k</i>
ḳ ^w	rounded explosive <i>k</i>	x ^w	rounded hissed <i>k</i>
ł	hissed <i>l</i>	x̣	hissed <i>q</i>
λ	<i>tl</i>	x̣ ^w	rounded hissed <i>q</i>
λ̣	explosive <i>tl</i>	y	<i>y</i>
m	<i>m</i>	ỵ	<i>y</i> with a catch
ṃ	<i>m</i> with a catch	ʔ	catch in throat
n	<i>n</i>	ʔ̣	catch in throat plus <i>r</i>
ṇ	<i>n</i> with a catch		

How to Pronounce the Nuuchahnulth Alphabet in the Ehattesaht Dialect

a	aa	c	č	č̣	č̣̣	e
ee	h	ḥ	i	ii	k	k ^w
ḳ	ḳ ^w	ł	λ	λ̣	m	ṃ
n	ṇ	o	oo	p	ḑ	q
q ^w	s	š	t	ṭ	u	uu
w	ẉ	x	x ^w	x̣	x̣ ^w	y
		ỵ	ʔ	ʔ̣		

Glottalized Consonants

Glottalized consonants are made like other consonants, plus an extra gesture at the vocal cords. Glottalization is pronounced differently on plosive and humming sounds.

Glottalized Plosives: \acute{c} \acute{c}^w \acute{k} \acute{k}^w $\acute{\lambda}$ \acute{p} \acute{t}

Plosive consonants involve a small explosion of air. When glottalized, they are pronounced with a stronger explosion.

\acute{c}	hard <i>c</i>	$\acute{c}a?ak$	river
\acute{c}^w	hard <i>c</i> wedge	$\acute{c}^w a?ak$	water
\acute{k}	hard <i>k</i>	$\acute{k}aa?in$	crow
\acute{k}^w	hard round <i>k</i>	$\acute{k}^w iis$	snow
$\acute{\lambda}$	hard barred lambda	$\acute{\lambda}aaq$	blubber
\acute{p}	hard <i>p</i>	$\acute{p}apii$	ear
\acute{t}	hard <i>t</i>	$\acute{t}atuus$	star

Glottalized humming sounds: \acute{m} \acute{n} \acute{w} \acute{y}

Humming consonants are made with vibrating vocal cords. When glottalized, they are pronounced longer, and are preceded by a catch in the throat like a glottal stop.

\acute{m}	hard <i>m</i>	$\acute{m}aa\acute{m}iiqsu$	older sibling
\acute{n}	hard <i>n</i>	$\acute{n}aas$	day, God
\acute{w}	hard <i>w</i>	$\acute{w}aa?ak$	shy
\acute{y}	hard <i>y</i>	$\acute{y}a?isi$	butter clam

Further, each of these consonants can be *rounded*—that is, pronounced with the lips in an *o* shape:

k ^w	round <i>k</i>	k ^w isaath	from another tribe
q ^w	round <i>q</i>	q ^w inii	seagull
x ^w	round front <i>x</i>	tux ^w ii	earrings
ḡ ^w	round back <i>x</i>	ḡ ^w itaayu	butcher knife

Guttural Consonants: *h ɥ ʔ ʕ*

A few consonants are made even further back in the throat. The plain *h* and glottal stop are made at the vocal cords.

h	<i>h</i>	like <i>h</i>
ʔ	glottal stop	catch in the throat, as in <i>uh-oh</i>

hamuut	bone	ʔaʔaatu	ask
haʔum	good-tasting	ʔumʔiiqsu	mother

The back *h* and pharyngeal stop are pharyngeal sounds, made with the tongue root against the back of the throat.

ɥ	back <i>h</i>	raspy, pharyngeal <i>h</i>	
ʕ	pharyngeal stop	catch plus a pharyngeal <i>r</i>	
ɥayu	ten	ʕiniiʕ	dog
ʔiiɥ	big	waaʕit	frog

The Nuu-chah-nulth Alphabet

The Nuu-chah-nulth alphabet has forty-five letters:

a	aa	c	ć	č	č̣	e	ee	h
ɥ	i	ii	k	k ^w	ḳ	ḳ ^w	ł	ʕ
ʕ̣	m	ṃ	n	ṇ	o	oo	p	p̣
q	q ^w	s	š	t	ṭ	u	uu	w
ẉ	x	x ^w	ḡ	ḡ ^w	y	ý	ʔ	ʕ

This booklet describes each letter of the Nuu-chah-nulth alphabet, including its name and how it is pronounced, using examples from the Ehattesaht dialect.

Vowels: *a aa e ee i ii o oo u uu*

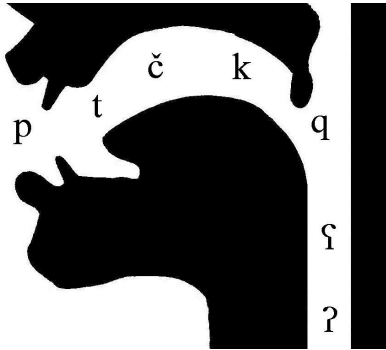
Vowels are singable sounds made with open mouth and throat. Long vowels are about twice as long as short vowels.

Vowel	As in...	Example
a	short <i>a</i>	<u>uh</u> ʔaya many, a lot
aa	long <i>a</i>	<u>ah</u> ʔaama loon
e	short <i>e</i>	<u>get</u>
ee	long <i>e</i>	<u>get</u> ʕeekoo thank you
i	short <i>i</i>	<u>bit</u> hisit sockeye
ii	long <i>i</i>	<u>ski</u> piipa paper
o	short <i>o</i>	<u>aw</u>
oo	long <i>o</i>	<u>aw</u> ʔoomi mom
u	short <i>u</i>	<u>put</u> ʔuyii give
uu	long <i>u</i>	<u>due</u> muu four

Short *e* and short *o* are rare in Ehattesaht, but are found in some other Nuu-chah-nulth dialects.

Consonants

Consonants are quieter and less singable than vowels. Nuu-chah-nulth has more consonants than English. This map shows where in the mouth and throat Nuu-chah-nulth consonants are made, using *p, t, č, k, q, ʕ, ʔ* as examples:



On the following pages, the consonants are described roughly by their difficulty, from the easiest to the hardest.

Common Consonants: *h k m n p s t w y*

These letters are common to both Nuu-chah-nulth and English, and are pronounced the same in both languages.

tii	tea	taana	money
suu	holding	wiikuus	no one home
tupkak	black	husmin	bull kelp
pata	butter	saasin	hummingbird
paasak	damp	kiwitaana	horse
mamuuk	work	hamuut	bone

Familiar Consonants, Strange Letters: *c č š*

These consonant letters represent sounds that are familiar from English, but are written differently in Nuu-chah-nulth:

c	c	like <i>ts</i>	ciqciqa	talking
č	c wedge	like <i>ch</i>	čaačišt	island
š	s wedge	like <i>sh</i>	šaaššaašš	umbrella

By contrast, the letters *c, q, x* look familiar, but represent different sounds in Nuu-chah-nulth and English. See below.

L Sounds: *ł λ*

Nuu-chah-nulth does not use the English *l* sound, but does use some other *l* sounds.

ł	barred <i>l</i>	hissed <i>l</i>	łuucma	woman
λ	barred lambda	like <i>tl</i>	λuł	good

You can sometimes hear the barred *l* in English too, in words like *clear, please, and athlete*.

Back-of-the-Tongue Consonants: *k k^w q q^w x x^w ɣ ɣ^w*

Nuu-chah-nulth uses several sounds that are made with the back of the tongue. While *k, x* are pronounced slightly more forward, *q, ɣ* are pronounced slightly further back.

k	<i>k</i>	like <i>k</i>	kiwitaana	horse
q	<i>q</i>	a back <i>k</i>	qasii	eye
x	front <i>x</i>	a hissed <i>k</i>	xaaʔamin	ladder
ɣ	back <i>x</i>	a hissed <i>q</i>	muuxšiλ	boil