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English language

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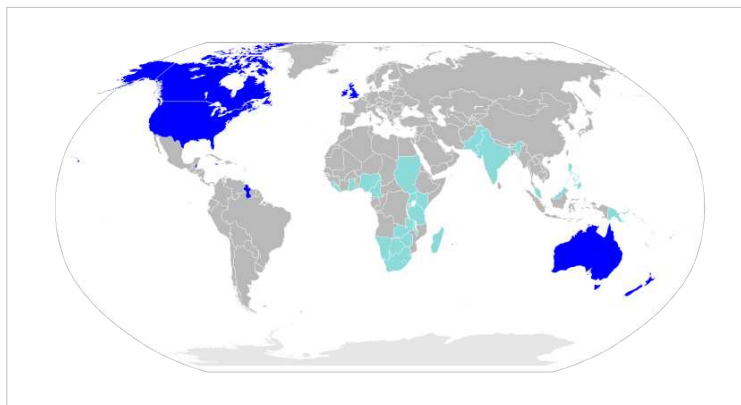
Introduction

Note. This book is based on the Wikipedia article, "English language." The supporting articles are those referenced as major expansions of selected sections.

Main article

English language

English	
Pronunciation	/ˈɪŋɡlɪ/^[1]
Spoken in	(see below)
Total speakers	First language: 309–400 million Second language: 199 million–1.4 billion ^{[2] [3]} Overall: 500 million–1.8 billion ^{[3] [4]}
Ranking	3 (native speakers) ^[5] Total: 1 or 2 ^[6]
Language family	Indo-European <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Germanic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Germanic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anglo–Frisian <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anglic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> English
Writing system	Latin (English variant)
Official status	
Official language in	53 countries United Nations European Union Commonwealth of Nations CoE NATO NAFTA OAS OIC PIF UKUSA
Regulated by	<i>No official regulation</i>
Language codes	
ISO 639-1	en
ISO 639-2	eng
ISO 639-3	eng ^[7]
Linguasphere	52-ABA



Countries where English is an official or de facto official language, or national language Countries where it is an official but not primary language.

English is a West Germanic language that arose in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of England and spread into what was to become south-east Scotland under the influence of the Anglian medieval kingdom of Northumbria. Following the economic, political, military, scientific, cultural, and colonial influence of Great Britain and the United Kingdom from the 18th century, via the British Empire, and of the United States since the mid-20th century,^{[8] [9] [10] [11]} it has been widely dispersed around the world, become the leading language of international discourse, and has acquired use as *lingua franca* in many regions.^{[12] [13]} It is widely learned as a second language and used as an official language of the European Union and many Commonwealth countries, as well as in many world organizations. It is the third most natively spoken language in the world, after Mandarin Chinese and Spanish.^[14]

Historically, English originated from the fusion of languages and dialects, now collectively termed Old English, which were brought to the eastern coast of Great Britain by Germanic (Anglo-Saxon) settlers by the 5th century – with the word *English* being derived from the name of the Angles.^[15] A significant number of English words are constructed based on roots from Latin, because Latin in some form was the *lingua franca* of the Christian Church and of European intellectual life.^[16] The language was further influenced by the Old Norse language with Viking invasions in the 8th and 9th centuries.

The Norman conquest of England in the 11th century gave rise to heavy borrowings from Norman-French, and vocabulary and spelling conventions began to give the superficial appearance of a close relationship with Romance languages^{[17] [18]} to what had now become Middle English. The Great Vowel Shift that began in the south of England in the 15th century is one of the historical events that mark the emergence of Modern English from Middle English.

Owing to the significant assimilation of various European languages throughout history, modern English contains a very large vocabulary. The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists over 250,000 distinct words, not including many technical or slang terms, or words that belong to multiple word classes.^{[19] [20]}

Significance

Modern English, sometimes described as the first global lingua franca,^{[21] [22]} is the dominant language or in some instances even the required international language of communications, science, information technology, business, aviation, entertainment, radio and diplomacy.^[23] Its spread beyond the British Isles began with the growth of the British Empire, and by the late 19th century its reach was truly global.^[3] Following the British colonization of North America, it became the dominant language in the United States and in Canada. The growing economic and cultural influence of the US and its status as a global superpower since World War II have significantly accelerated the language's spread across the planet.^[22] English replaced German as the dominant language of science Nobel Prize laureates during the second half of the 20th century^[24] (compare the Evolution of Nobel Prizes by country).

A working knowledge of English has become a requirement in a number of fields, occupations and professions such as medicine and computing; as a consequence over a billion people speak English to at least a basic level (see English language learning and teaching). It is one of six official languages of the United Nations.

One impact of the growth of English has been to reduce native linguistic diversity in many parts of the world, and its influence continues to play an important role in language attrition.^[25] Conversely the natural internal variety of English along with creoles and pidgins have the potential to produce new distinct languages from English over time.^[26]

History

English is a West Germanic language that originated from the Anglo-Frisian and Old Saxon dialects brought to Britain by Germanic settlers from various parts of what is now northwest Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands.^[27] Up to that point, in Roman Britain the native population is assumed to have spoken the Celtic language Brythonic alongside the acrolectal influence of Latin, from the 400-year Roman occupation.^[28]

One of these incoming Germanic tribes was the Angles,^[29] whom Bede believed to have relocated entirely to Britain.^[30] The names 'England' (from *Engla land*^[31] "Land of the Angles") and *English* (Old English *Englisc*^[32]) are derived from the name of this tribe—but Saxons, Jutes and a range of Germanic peoples from the coasts of Frisia, Lower Saxony, Jutland and Southern Sweden also moved to Britain in this era.^{[33] [34] [35]}

Initially, Old English was a diverse group of dialects, reflecting the varied origins of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Great Britain^[36] but one of these dialects, Late West Saxon, eventually came to dominate, and it is in this that the poem *Beowulf* is written.

Old English was later transformed by two waves of invasion. The first was by speakers of the North Germanic language branch when Halfdan Ragnarsson and Ivar the Boneless started the conquering and colonisation of northern parts of the British Isles in the 8th and 9th centuries (see Danelaw). The second was by speakers of the Romance language Old Norman in the 11th century with the Norman conquest of England. Norman developed into Anglo-Norman, and then Anglo-French - and introduced a layer of words especially via the courts and government. As well as extending the lexicon with Scandinavian and Norman words these two events also simplified the grammar and transformed English into a borrowing language—more than normally open to accept new words from other languages.

The linguistic shifts in English following the Norman invasion produced what is now referred to as Middle English, with Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* being the best known work.

Throughout all this period Latin in some form was the *lingua franca* of European intellectual life, first the Medieval Latin of the Christian Church, but later the humanist Renaissance Latin, and those that wrote or copied texts in Latin^[16] commonly coined new terms from Latin to refer to things or concepts for which there was no existing native English word.

Modern English, which includes the works of William Shakespeare^[37] and the King James Bible, is generally dated from about 1550, and when the United Kingdom became a colonial power, English served as the lingua franca of the colonies of the British Empire. In the post-colonial period, some of the newly created nations which had multiple indigenous languages opted to continue using English as the lingua franca to avoid the political difficulties inherent in promoting any one indigenous language above the others. As a result of the growth of the British Empire, English was adopted in North America, India, Africa, Australia and many other regions, a trend extended with the emergence of the United States as a superpower in the mid-20th century.

Classification and related languages

The English language belongs to the Anglo-Frisian sub-group of the West Germanic branch of the Germanic family, a member of the Indo-European languages. Modern English is the direct descendant of Middle English, itself a direct descendant of Old English, a descendant of Proto-Germanic. Typical of most Germanic languages, English is characterised by the use of modal verbs, the division of verbs into strong and weak classes, and common sound shifts from Proto-Indo-European known as Grimm's Law. The closest living relatives of English are the Scots language (spoken primarily in Scotland and parts of Ireland) and Frisian (spoken on the southern fringes of the North Sea in Denmark, the Netherlands, and Germany).

After Scots and Frisian come those Germanic languages that are more distantly related: the non-Anglo-Frisian West Germanic languages (Dutch, Afrikaans, Low German, High German), and the North Germanic languages (Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, Icelandic, and Faroese). With the exception of Scots, none of the other languages is mutually intelligible with English, owing in part to the divergences in lexis, syntax, semantics, and phonology, and to the isolation afforded to the English language by the British Isles, although some, such as Dutch, do show strong affinities with English, especially to earlier stages of the language. Isolation has allowed English and Scots (as well as Icelandic and Faroese) to develop independently of the Continental Germanic languages and their influences over time.^[38]

In addition to isolation, lexical differences between English and other Germanic languages exist due to heavy borrowing in English of words from Latin and French. For example, we say "exit" (Latin), vs. Dutch *uitgang*, literally "out-going" (though *outgang* survives dialectally in restricted usage) and "change" (French) vs. German *Änderung* (literally "alteration, othering"); "movement" (French) vs. German *Bewegung* ("be-way-ing", i.e. "proceeding along the way"); etc. Preference of one synonym over another also causes differentiation in lexis, even where both words are Germanic, as in English *care* vs. German *Sorge*. Both words descend from Proto-Germanic **karō* and **surgō* respectively, but **karō* has become the dominant word in English for "care" while in German, Dutch, and Scandinavian languages, the **surgō* root prevailed. **Surgō* still survives in English, however, as *sorrow*.

In English, all basic grammatical particles added to nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs are Germanic. For nouns, these include the normal plural marker *-s/-es*, and the possessive markers *'s* and *'s'*. For verbs, these include the third person present ending *-s/-es* (e.g. *he stands/she reaches*), the present participle ending *-ing*, the simple past tense and past participle ending *-ed*, and the formation of the English infinitive using *to* (e.g. "to drive"; cf. Old English *tō drīfenne*). Adverbs generally receive an *-ly* ending, and adjectives and adverbs are inflected for the comparative and superlative using *-er* and *-est* (e.g. *fast/faster/fastest*), or through a combination with *more* and *most*. These particles append freely to all English words regardless of origin (*tsunamis; communicates; to buccaneer; during; bizarrely*) and all derive from Old English. Even the lack or absence of affixes, known as zero or null ($-\emptyset$) affixes, derive from endings which previously existed in Old English (usually *-e*, *-a*, *-u*, *-o*, *-an*, etc.), that later weakened to *-e*, and have since ceased to be pronounced and spelt (e.g. Modern English "I sing" = *I sing- \emptyset* < *I singe* < Old English *ic singe*; "we thought" = *we thought- \emptyset* < *we thoughte(n)* < Old English *wē þōhton*).

Although the syntax of English is somewhat different from that of other West Germanic languages with regards to the placement and order of verbs (for example, "I **have** never **seen** anything in the square" = German *Ich **habe** nie etwas auf dem Platz **gesehen***, and the Dutch *Ik **heb** nooit iets op het plein **gezien***, where the participle is placed at the end), English syntax continues to adhere closely to that of the North Germanic languages, which are believed to have influenced English syntax during the Middle English Period (e.g., Danish *Jeg **har** aldrig **set** noget på torvet*; Icelandic *Ég **hef** aldrei **séð** neitt á torginu*). As in most Germanic languages, English adjectives usually come before the noun they modify, even when the adjective is of Latinate origin (e.g. *medical emergency, national treasure*). Also, English continues to make extensive use of self-explaining compounds (e.g. *streetcar, classroom*), and nouns which serve as modifiers (e.g. *lamp post, life insurance company*), a trait inherited from Old English (See also Kenning).

The kinship with other Germanic languages can also be seen in the large amount of cognates (e.g. Dutch *zenden*, German *senden*, English *send*; Dutch *goud*, German *Gold*, English *gold*, etc.). It also gives rise to false friends, see for example English *time* vs Norwegian *time* ("hour"), and differences in phonology can obscure words that really are related (*tooth* vs. German *Zahn*; compare also Danish *tand*). Sometimes both semantics *and* phonology are different (German *Zeit* ("time") is related to English "tide", but the English word, through a transitional phase of meaning "period"/"interval", has come primarily to mean gravitational effects on the ocean by the moon, though the original meaning is preserved in forms like *tidings* and *betide*, and phrases such as *to tide over*).

Many North Germanic words entered English due to the settlement of Viking raiders and Danish invasions which began around the 9th century (see Danelaw). Many of these words are common words, often mistaken for being native, which shows how close-knit the relations between the English and the Scandinavian settlers were (*See below: Old Norse origins*). Dutch and Low German also had a considerable influence on English vocabulary, contributing common everyday terms and many nautical and trading terms (*See below: Dutch and Low German origins*).

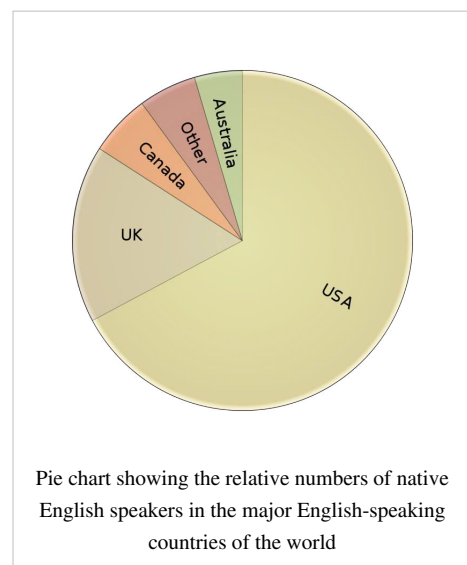
Finally, English has been forming compound words and affixing existing words separately from the other Germanic languages for over 1500 years and has different habits in that regard. For instance, abstract nouns in English may be formed from native words by the suffixes "-hood", "-ship", "-dom" and "-ness". All of these have cognate suffixes in most or all other Germanic languages, but their usage patterns have diverged, as German "Freiheit" vs. English "freedom" (the suffix "-heit" being cognate of English "-hood", while English "-dom" is cognate with German "-tum"). The Germanic languages Icelandic and Faroese also follow English in this respect, since, like English, they developed independent of German influences.

Many French words are also intelligible to an English speaker, especially when they are seen in writing (as pronunciations are often quite different), because English absorbed a large vocabulary from Norman and French, via Anglo-Norman after the Norman Conquest, and directly from French in subsequent centuries. As a result, a large portion of English vocabulary is derived from French, with some minor spelling differences (e.g. inflectional endings, use of old French spellings, lack of diacritics, etc.), as well as occasional divergences in meaning of so-called false friends: for example, compare "library" with the French *librairie*, which means bookstore; in French, the word for "library" is *bibliothèque*. The pronunciation of most French loanwords in English (with the exception of a handful of more recently borrowed words such as *mirage*, *genre*, *café*; or phrases like *coup d'état*, *rendez-vous*, etc.) has become largely anglicised and follows a typically English phonology and pattern of stress (compare English "nature" vs. French *nature*, "button" vs. *bouton*, "table" vs. *table*, "hour" vs. *heure*, "reside" vs. *résider*, etc.).

Geographical distribution

Approximately 375 million people speak English as their first language.^[39] English today is probably the third largest language by number of native speakers, after Mandarin Chinese and Spanish.^[14] ^[40] However, when combining native and non-native speakers it is probably the most commonly spoken language in the world, though possibly second to a combination of the Chinese languages (depending on whether or not distinctions in the latter are classified as "languages" or "dialects").^[41] ^[42]

Estimates that include second language speakers vary greatly from 470 million to over a billion depending on how literacy or mastery is defined and measured.^[43] ^[44] Linguistics professor David Crystal calculates that non-native speakers now outnumber native speakers by a ratio of 3 to 1.^[45]



The countries with the highest populations of native English speakers are, in descending order: United States (215 million),^[46] United Kingdom (61 million),^[47] Canada (18.2 million),^[48] Australia (15.5 million),^[49] Nigeria (4 million),^[50] Ireland (3.8 million),^[47] South Africa (3.7 million),^[51] and New Zealand (3.6 million) 2006 Census.^[52]

Countries such as the Philippines, Jamaica and Nigeria also have millions of native speakers of dialect continua ranging from an English-based creole to a more standard version of English. Of those nations where English is spoken as a second language, India has the most such speakers ('Indian English'). Crystal claims that, combining native and non-native speakers, India now has more people who speak or understand English than any other country in the world.^[53] ^[54]

Countries in order of total speakers

Country	Total	Percent of population	First language	As an additional language	Population	Comment
United States of America	251,388,301	96%	215,423,557	35,964,744	262,375,152	Source: US Census 2000: Language Use and English-Speaking Ability: 2000 ^[55] , Table 1. Figure for second language speakers are respondents who reported they do not speak English at home but know it "very well" or "well". Note: figures are for population age 5 and older
India	125,344,736	12%	226,449	86,125,221 <i>second</i> language speakers. 38,993,066 <i>third</i> language speakers	1,028,737,436	Figures include both those who speak English as a <i>second language</i> and those who speak it as a <i>third language</i> . 2001 figures. ^[56] ^[57] The figures include English <i>speakers</i> , but not English <i>users</i> . ^[58]
Nigeria	79,000,000	53%	4,000,000	>75,000,000	148,000,000	Figures are for speakers of Nigerian Pidgin, an English-based pidgin or creole. Ithemere gives a range of roughly 3 to 5 million native speakers; the midpoint of the range is used in the table. Ithemere, Kelechukwu Uchechukwu. 2006. "A Basic Description and Analytic Treatment of Noun Clauses in Nigerian Pidgin." ^[59] , <i>Nordic Journal of African Studies</i> 15(3): 296–313.
United Kingdom	59,600,000	98%	58,100,000	1,500,000	60,000,000	Source: Crystal (2005), p. 109.
Philippines	48,800,000	58% ^[60]	3,427,000 ^[60]	43,974,000	84,566,000	Total speakers: Census 2000, text above Figure 7 ^[61] . 63.71% of the 66.7 million people aged 5 years or more could speak English. Native speakers: Census 1995, as quoted by Andrew González in <i>The Language Planning Situation in the Philippines</i> ^[62] , <i>Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development</i> , 19 (5&6), 487–525. (1998). Ethnologue lists 3.4 million native speakers with 52% of the population speaking it as an additional language. ^[60]
Canada	25,246,220	85%	17,694,830	7,551,390	29,639,030	Source: 2001 Census – Knowledge of Official Languages ^[63] and Mother Tongue ^[64] . The native speakers figure comprises 122,660 people with both French and English as a mother tongue, plus 17,572,170 people with English and not French as a mother tongue.

Australia	18,172,989	92%	15,581,329	2,591,660	19,855,288	Source: 2006 Census. ^[65] The figure shown in the first language English speakers column is actually the number of Australian residents who speak only English at home. The additional language column shows the number of other residents who claim to speak English "well" or "very well". Another 5% of residents did not state their home language or English proficiency.
Note: Total = First language + Other language; Percentage = Total / Population						

Countries where English is a major language

English is the primary language in Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, the British Indian Ocean Territory, the British Virgin Islands, Canada, the Cayman Islands, Dominica, the Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Grenada, Guam, Guernsey, Guyana, Ireland, The Isle of Man, Jamaica, Jersey, Montserrat, Nauru, New Zealand, Pitcairn Islands, Saint Helena, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Singapore, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, the Turks and Caicos Islands, the United Kingdom and the United States.

In some countries where English is not the most spoken language, it is an official language; these countries include Botswana, Cameroon, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Gambia, Ghana, India, Kenya, Kiribati, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malta, the Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines (Philippine English), Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Samoa, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, the Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

It is also one of the 11 official languages that are given equal status in South Africa (South African English). English is also the official language in current dependent territories of Australia (Norfolk Island, Christmas Island and Cocos Island) and of the United States (American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands),^[66] and the former British colony of Hong Kong. (See List of countries where English is an official language for more details.)

English is not an official language in either the United States or the United Kingdom.^[67] ^[68] Although the United States federal government has no official languages, English has been given official status by 30 of the 50 state governments.^[69] Although falling short of official status, English is also an important language in several former colonies and protectorates of the United Kingdom, such as Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brunei, Cyprus, Malaysia, and the United Arab Emirates. English is not an official language of Israel, but is taken as a required second language at all schools and therefore widely spoken.^[70]

English as a global language

Because English is so widely spoken, it has often been referred to as a "world language", the *lingua franca* of the modern era,^[22] and while it is not an official language in most countries, it is currently the language most often taught as a foreign language. Some linguists believe that it is no longer the exclusive cultural property of "native English speakers", but is rather a language that is absorbing aspects of cultures worldwide as it continues to grow.^[22] It is, by international treaty, the official language for aerial and maritime communications.^[71] English is an official language of the United Nations and many other international organisations, including the International Olympic Committee.

English is the language most often studied as a foreign language in the European Union, by 89% of schoolchildren, ahead of French at 32%, while the perception of the usefulness of foreign languages amongst Europeans is 68% in favour of English ahead of 25% for French.^[72] Among some non-English speaking EU countries, a large percentage of the adult population can converse in English — in particular: 85% in Sweden, 83% in Denmark, 79% in the Netherlands, 66% in Luxembourg and over 50% in Finland, Slovenia, Austria, Belgium, and Germany.^[73]

Books, magazines, and newspapers written in English are available in many countries around the world, and English is the most commonly used language in the sciences^[22] with Science Citation Index reporting as early as 1997 that 95% of its articles were written in English, even though only half of them came from authors in English-speaking countries.

This increasing use of the English language globally has had a large impact on many other languages, leading to language shift and even language death,^[74] and to claims of linguistic imperialism.^[75] English itself is now open to language shift as multiple regional varieties feed back into the language as a whole.^[75] For this reason, the 'English language is forever evolving'.^[76]

Dialects and regional varieties

The expansion of the British Empire and—since World War II—the influence of the United States have spread English throughout the globe.^[22] Because of that global spread, English has developed a host of English dialects and English-based creole languages and pidgins.

Several educated native dialects of English have wide acceptance as standards in much of the world, with much emphasis placed on one dialect based on educated southern British and another based on educated Midwestern American. The former is sometimes called BBC (or the Queen's) English, and it may be noticeable by its preference for "Received Pronunciation". The latter dialect, General American, which is spread over most of the United States and much of Canada, is more typically the model for the American continents and areas (such as the Philippines) that have had either close association with the United States, or a desire to be so identified. In Oceania, the major native dialect of Australian English is spoken as a first language by 92% of the inhabitants of the Australian continent, with General Australian serving as the standard accent. The English of neighbouring New Zealand as well as that of South Africa have to a lesser degree been influential native varieties of the language.

Aside from these major dialects, there are numerous other varieties of English, which include, in most cases, several subvarieties, such as Cockney, Scouse and Geordie within British English; Newfoundland English within Canadian English; and African American Vernacular English ("Ebonics") and Southern American English within American English. English is a pluricentric language, without a central language authority like France's Académie française; and therefore no one variety is considered "correct" or "incorrect" except in terms of the expectations of the particular audience to which the language is directed.

Scots has its origins in early Northern Middle English^[77] and developed and changed during its history with influence from other sources, but following the Acts of Union 1707 a process of language attrition began, whereby successive generations adopted more and more features from Standard English, causing dialectalisation. Whether it is now a separate language or a dialect of English better described as Scottish English is in dispute, although the UK government now accepts Scots as a regional language and has recognised it as such under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.^[78] There are a number of regional dialects of Scots, and pronunciation, grammar and lexis of the traditional forms differ, sometimes substantially, from other varieties of English.

English speakers have many different accents, which often signal the speaker's native dialect or language. For the more distinctive characteristics of regional accents, see Regional accents of English, and for the more distinctive characteristics of regional dialects, see List of dialects of the English language. Within England, variation is now largely confined to pronunciation rather than grammar or vocabulary. At the time of the Survey of English Dialects, grammar and vocabulary differed across the country, but a process of *lexical attrition* has led most of this variation to die out.^[79]

Just as English itself has borrowed words from many different languages over its history, English loanwords now appear in many languages around the world, indicative of the technological and cultural influence of its speakers. Several pidgins and creole languages have been formed on an English base, such as Jamaican Patois, Nigerian Pidgin, and Tok Pisin. There are many words in English coined to describe forms of particular non-English languages that contain a very high proportion of English words.

Constructed varieties of English

- Basic English is simplified for easy international use. Manufacturers and other international businesses tend to write manuals and communicate in Basic English. Some English schools in Asia teach it as a practical subset of English for use by beginners.
- E-Prime excludes forms of the verb *to be*.
- English reform is an attempt to improve collectively upon the English language.
- Manually Coded English constitutes a variety of systems that have been developed to represent the English language with hand signals, designed primarily for use in deaf education. These should not be confused with true sign languages such as British Sign Language and American Sign Language used in Anglophone countries, which are independent and not based on English.
- Seaspeak and the related Airspeak and Policespeak, all based on restricted vocabularies, were designed by Edward Johnson in the 1980s to aid international cooperation and communication in specific areas. There is also tunnelspeak for use in the Channel Tunnel.
- Simplified Technical English was historically developed for aerospace industry maintenance manuals and is now used in various industries.
- Special English is a simplified version of English used by the Voice of America. It uses a vocabulary of only 1500 words.

Phonology

Vowels

It is the vowels that differ most from region to region. Length is not phonemic in most varieties of North American English.

IPA	word
monophthongs	
i:	bead
ɪ	bid
ɛ	bed ^[80]
æ	bad ^[81]
ɒ	box ^[82]
ɔ:	pawed ^[83]
ɑ:	bra
ʊ	good
u:	bood ^[84]
ʌ ^[85]	bud
ɜr	bird ^[86]
ə	Rosa's ^[87]
ɪ	roses ^{[87] [88]}
diphthongs	
eɪ	bayed ^[89]

oʊ	bode ^[90] [89]
aɪ	cry ^[91]
aʊ	cow ^[92]
ɔɪ	boy
ʊər	boor ^[93]
ɛər	fair ^[94]

Notes

- [1] "English, a. and n." The Oxford English Dictionary. 2nd ed. 1989. OED Online. Oxford University Press. 6 September 2007 <http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50075365>
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- [80] In RP, this is closer to [e]
- [81] In younger speakers of RP, this is closer to [a]
- [82] Many American English dialects lack this sound; in such dialects, words with this sound elsewhere are pronounced with /ɑ:/ or /ɔ:/. See *Lot-cloth split*.
- [83] Some dialects of North American English do not have this vowel. See *Cot-caught merger*.
- [84] The letter <U> can represent either /u:/ or the iotated vowel /ju:/. In BRP, if this iotated vowel /ju:./ occurs after /t/, /d/, /s/ or /z/, it often triggers palatalisation of the preceding consonant, turning it to [tʃ], [dʒ], [sʃ] and [zʒ] respectively, as in *tune*, *during*, *sugar*, and *azure*. In American English, palatalisation does not generally happen unless the /ju:./ is followed by /r/, with the result that /((t, d, s, z)ju:r/ turn to [tʃɔr], [dʒɔr] and [zɔr] respectively, as in *nature*, *verdure*, *sure*, and *treasure*.

- [85] The back-vowel symbol Λ is conventional for this English central vowel. It is actually generally closer to ɐ . In the northern half of England, this vowel is not used and ʊ is used in its place.
- [86] The North American variation of this sound is a rhotic vowel $[\text{ɜ}^r]$, the RP version a long central vowel $[\text{ɜ}ː]$.
- [87] Some speakers of North American English do not distinguish between these unstressed vowels, $\{\{\text{IPA}/\text{ə}/\}$ and $/\text{i}/$. Called schwa.
- [88] This sound is often transcribed with $/\text{ə}/$ or with $/\text{i}/$. Closer to $[\text{i}]$ than to $[\text{i}]$.
- [89] The diphthongs $/\text{e}\text{i}/$ and $/\text{o}\text{ʊ}/$ are monophthongal $[\text{e}ː]$ and $[\text{o}ː]$ in many dialects, including General American, Scottish, Irish and Northern English.
- [90] In RP and parts of North America, this is closer to $[\text{ə}\text{ʊ}]$. As a reduced vowel, it may become $[\text{ə}]$ ($[\text{ə}\text{ʊ}]$ before another vowel) or $[\text{ə}]$, depending on accent.
- [91] In parts of North America $/\text{a}\text{i}/$ is pronounced $[\text{a}\text{i}]$ before voiceless consonants, so that *writer* and *rider* are distinguished by their vowels, $[\text{'w}\text{a}\text{i}\text{r}\text{ə}, \text{'r}\text{a}\text{i}\text{r}\text{ə}]$, rather than their consonants. This is near-universal in Canada, and most non-Southern American English dialects also have undergone the shift; in the 2008 presidential election, both candidates as well as their vice-presidents all used $[\text{a}\text{i}]$ for the word "right".
- [92] In Canada, this is pronounced $[\text{a}\text{ʊ}]$ before a voiceless consonant.
- [93] In many accents, this sound is coming to be pronounced $[\text{ɔ}ː(\text{r})]$ rather than $[\text{ɔ}\text{ə}(\text{r})]$. See English-language vowel changes before historic *r*.
- [94] In some non-rhotic accents, the schwa offglide of $/\text{e}\text{ə}/$ may be dropped, monophthising and lengthening the sound to $[\text{e}ː]$.

Consonants

This is the English consonantal system using symbols from the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Labial-velar	Glottal
Nasal	m			n			$\text{ŋ}^{[1]}$		
Plosive	p b			t d			k g		
Affricate					$\text{tʃ dʒ}^{[2]}$				
Fricative		f v	$\theta \delta^{[3]}$	s z	$\text{ʃ ʒ}^{[2]}$	$\text{ç}^{[4]}$	$\text{x}^{[5]}$		h
Flap					$\text{r}^{[6]}$				
Approximant				$\text{j}^{[2]}$		j		$\text{w}^{[7]}$	
Lateral				l					

Notes

- [1] The velar nasal $[\text{ŋ}]$ is a non-phonemic allophone of $/\text{n}/$ in some northerly British accents, appearing only before $/\text{k}/$ and $/\text{g}/$. In all other dialects it is a separate phoneme, although it only occurs in syllable codas.
- [2] The sounds $/\text{j}/$, $/\text{ʒ}/$, and $/\text{ɹ}/$ are labialised in some dialects. Labialisation is never contrastive in initial position and therefore is sometimes not transcribed. Most speakers of General American realise $\langle \text{r} \rangle$ (always rhoticised) as the retroflex approximant $/\text{ɹ}/$, whereas the same is realised in Scottish English, etc. as the alveolar trill.
- [3] In some dialects, such as Cockney, the interdentalals $/\theta/$ and $/\delta/$ have usually merged with $/\text{f}/$ and $/\text{v}/$, and in others, like African American Vernacular English, $/\delta/$ has merged with dental $/\text{d}/$. In some Irish varieties, $/\theta/$ and $/\delta/$ become dental plosives, which then contrast with the usual alveolar plosives.
- [4] The voiceless palatal fricative $/\text{ç}/$ is in most accents just an allophone of $/\text{h}/$ before $/\text{j}/$; for instance *human* $[\text{h}\text{ju}ː\text{m}\text{ən}]$. However, in some accents (see this), the $/\text{j}/$ has dropped, but the initial consonant is the same.
- [5] The voiceless velar fricative $/\text{x}/$ is used by Scottish or Welsh speakers of English for Scots/Gaelic words such as *loch* $[\text{lɔx}]$ or by some speakers for loanwords from German and Hebrew like *Bach* $[\text{bax}]$ or *Chanukah* $[\text{xanuka}]$. $/\text{x}/$ is also used in South African English. In some dialects such as Scouse (Liverpool) either $[\text{x}]$ or the affricate $[\text{kx}]$ may be used as an allophone of $/\text{k}/$ in words such as *docker* $[\text{dɔkxə}]$.
- [6] The alveolar tap $[\text{ɾ}]$ is an allophone of $/\text{t}/$ and $/\text{d}/$ in unstressed syllables in North American English and Australian English. Cox, Felicity (2006). "Australian English Pronunciation into the 21st century" (http://web.archive.org/web/20070724185054/http://www.shlrc.mq.edu.au/~felicity/Papers/Prospect_Erratum_v1.pdf) (PDF). *Prospect* 21: 3–21. Archived from the original (http://www.shlrc.mq.edu.au/~felicity/Papers/Prospect_Erratum_v1.pdf) on July 24, 2007. . Retrieved 2007-07-22. This is the sound of *tt* or *dd* in the words *latter* and *ladder*, which are homophones for many speakers of North American English. In some accents such as Scottish English and Indian English it replaces $/\text{ɹ}/$. This is the same sound represented by single *r* in most varieties of Spanish.
- [7] Voiceless *w* $[\text{w̥}]$ is found in Scottish and Irish English, as well as in some varieties of American, New Zealand, and English English. In most other dialects it is merged with $/\text{w}/$, in some dialects of Scots it is merged with $/\text{f}/$.

Voicing and aspiration

Voicing and aspiration of stop consonants in English depend on dialect and context, but a few general rules can be given:

- Voiceless plosives and affricates (/p/, /t/, /k/, and /tʃ/) are aspirated when they are word-initial or begin a stressed syllable – compare *pin* [p^hɪn] and *spin* [spɪn], *crap* [k^hɹæp] and *scrap* [skɹæp].
 - In some dialects, aspiration extends to unstressed syllables as well.
 - In other dialects, such as Indian English, all voiceless stops remain unaspirated.
- Word-initial voiced plosives may be devoiced in some dialects.
- Word-terminal voiceless plosives may be unreleased or accompanied by a glottal stop in some dialects; examples: *tap* [t^hæp̚], *sack* [sæk̚].
- Word-terminal voiced plosives may be devoiced in some dialects (e.g. some varieties of American English) – examples: *sad* [sæɖ], *bag* [bæɪɖ̚]. In other dialects, they are fully voiced in final position, but only partially voiced in initial position.

Supra-segmental features

Tone groups

English is an intonation language. This means that the pitch of the voice is used syntactically; for example, to convey surprise or irony, or to change a statement into a question.

In English, intonation patterns are on groups of words, which are called tone groups, tone units, intonation groups, or sense groups. Tone groups are said on a single breath and, as a consequence, are of limited length, more often being on average five words long or lasting roughly two seconds. For example:

/du: ju: 'ni:d 'ɛnɪθɪŋ/ *Do you need anything?*

/aɪ 'doʊnt | 'noʊ/ *I don't, no*

/aɪ doʊnt 'noʊ/ *I don't know* (contracted to, for example, ['aɪ doʊnoʊ] or ['aɪdnoʊ] *I dunno* in fast or colloquial speech that de-emphasises the pause between 'don't' and 'know' even further)

Characteristics of intonation—stress

English is a strongly stressed language, in that certain syllables, both within words and within phrases, get a relative prominence/loudness during pronunciation while the others do not. The former kind of syllables are said to be *accentuated/stressed* and the latter are *unaccentuated/unstressed*. Stress can also be used in English to distinguish between certain verbs and their noun counterparts. For example, in the case of the verb *contract*, the second syllable is stressed: /kɒn.'trækt/; in case of the corresponding noun, the first syllable is stressed: /'kɒn.trækt/. Vowels in unstressed syllables can also change in quality, hence the verb *contract* often becomes (and indeed is listed in Oxford English Dictionary as) /kən.'trækt/.^[1] In each word, there can be only one principal stress, but in long words, there can be secondary stress(es) too, e.g. in *civilisation* /ˌsɪ.və.laɪ.'zeɪ.ʃən/, the 1st syllable carries the secondary stress, the 4th syllable carries the primary stress, and the other syllables are unstressed.^[2]

Hence in a sentence, each tone group can be subdivided into syllables, which can either be stressed (strong) or unstressed (weak). The stressed syllable is called the nuclear syllable. For example:

*That | was | the | **best** | thing | you | could | have | **done**!*

Here, all syllables are unstressed, except the syllables/words *best* and *done*, which are stressed. *Best* is stressed harder and, therefore, is the nuclear syllable.

The nuclear syllable carries the main point the speaker wishes to make. For example:

John had not stolen that money. (... Someone else had.)

John *had not* stolen that money. (... Someone said he had. or... Not at that time, but later he did.)

John had not *stolen* that money. (... He acquired the money by some other means.)

John had not stolen *that* money. (... He had stolen some other money.)

John had not stolen that *money*. (... He had stolen something else.)

Also

I did not tell her that. (... Someone else told her)

I did not tell her that. (... You said I did. or... but now I will)

I did not *tell* her that. (... I did not say it; she could have inferred it, etc)

I did not tell *her* that. (... I told someone else)

I did not tell her *that*. (... I told her something else)

This can also be used to express emotion:

Oh, really? (...I did not know that)

Oh, *really*? (...I disbelieve you. or... That is blatantly obvious)

The nuclear syllable is spoken more loudly than the others and has a characteristic change of pitch. The changes of pitch most commonly encountered in English are the rising pitch and the falling pitch, although the fall-rising pitch and/or the rise-falling pitch are sometimes used. In this opposition between falling and rising pitch, which plays a larger role in English than in most other languages, falling pitch conveys certainty and rising pitch uncertainty. This can have a crucial impact on meaning, specifically in relation to polarity, the positive–negative opposition; thus, falling pitch means, "polarity known", while rising pitch means "polarity unknown". This underlies the rising pitch of yes/no questions. For example:

When do you want to be paid?

Now? (Rising pitch. In this case, it denotes a question: "Can I be paid now?" or "Do you desire to pay now?")

Now. (Falling pitch. In this case, it denotes a statement: "I choose to be paid now.")

Grammar

English grammar has minimal inflection compared with most other Indo-European languages. For example, Modern English, unlike Modern German or Dutch and the Romance languages, lacks grammatical gender and adjectival agreement. Case marking has almost disappeared from the language and mainly survives in pronouns. The patterning of strong (e.g. *speak/spoke/spoken*) versus weak verbs (e.g. *love/loved* or *kick/kicked*) inherited from its Germanic origins has declined in importance in modern English, and the remnants of inflection (such as plural marking) have become more regular.

At the same time, the language has become more analytic, and has developed features such as modal verbs and word order as resources for conveying meaning. Auxiliary verbs mark constructions such as questions, negative polarity, the passive voice and progressive aspect.

Vocabulary

The English vocabulary has changed considerably over the centuries.^[3]

Like many languages deriving from Proto-Indo-European (PIE), many of the most common words in English can trace back their origin (through the Germanic branch) to PIE. Such words include the basic pronouns *I*, from Old English *ic*, (cf. German *Ich*, Gothic *ik*, Latin *ego*, Greek *ego*, Sanskrit *aham*), *me* (cf. German *mich*, *mir*, Gothic *mik*, *mīs*, Latin *me*, Greek *eme*, Sanskrit *mam*), numbers (e.g. *one*, *two*, *three*, cf. Dutch *een*, *twee*, *drie*, Gothic *ains*, *twai*, *threis* (*preis*), Latin *unus*, *duo*, *tres*, Greek *oinos* "ace (on dice)", *duo*, *treis*), common family relationships such as mother, father, brother, sister etc. (cf. Dutch *moeder*, Greek *meter*, Latin *mater*, Sanskrit *matr*; *mother*), names of many animals (cf. German *Maus*, Dutch *muis*, Sanskrit *mus*, Greek *mys*, Latin *mus*; *mouse*), and many common

verbs (cf. Old High German *knājan*, Old Norse *knā*, Greek *gignōmi*, Latin *gnoscere*, Hittite *kānes*; *to know*).

Germanic words (generally words of Old English or to a lesser extent Old Norse origin) tend to be shorter than Latinate words, and are more common in ordinary speech, and include nearly all the basic pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, modal verbs etc. that form the basis of English syntax and grammar. The shortness of the words is generally due to syncope in Middle English (e.g. OldEng *hēafod* > ModEng *head*, OldEng *sāwol* > ModEng *soul*) and to the loss of final syllables due to stress (e.g. OldEng *gamen* > ModEng *game*, OldEng *ārende* > ModEng *errand*), not because Germanic words are inherently shorter than Latinate words. (The lengthier, higher-register words of Old English were largely forgotten following the subjugation of English after the Norman Conquest, and most of the Old English lexis devoted to literature, the arts, and sciences ceased to be productive when it fell into disuse. Only the shorter, more direct, words of Old English tended to pass into the Modern language.) Consequently, those words which tend to be regarded as elegant or educated in Modern English are usually Latinate. However, the excessive use of Latinate words is considered at times to be either pretentious or an attempt to obfuscate an issue. George Orwell's essay "Politics and the English Language", considered an important scrutinisation of the English language, is critical of this, as well as other perceived misuses of the language.

An English speaker is in many cases able to choose between Germanic and Latinate synonyms: *come* or *arrive*; *sight* or *vision*; *freedom* or *liberty*. In some cases, there is a choice between a Germanic derived word (*oversee*), a Latin derived word (*supervise*), and a French word derived from the same Latin word (*survey*); or even words derived from Norman French (e.g., *warranty*) and Parisian French (*guarantee*), and even choices involving multiple Germanic and Latinate sources are possible: *sickness* (Old English), *ill* (Old Norse), *infirmity* (French), *affliction* (Latin). Such synonyms harbor a variety of different meanings and nuances. Yet the ability to choose between multiple synonyms is not a consequence of French and Latin influence, as this same richness existed in English prior to the extensive borrowing of French and Latin terms. Old English was extremely resourceful in its ability to express synonyms and shades of meaning on its own, in many respects rivaling or exceeding that of Modern English (synonyms numbering in the thirties for certain concepts were not uncommon). Take for instance the various ways to express the word "astronomer" or "astrologer" in Old English: *tunglere*, *tungolcraeftiga*, *tungolwītega*, *tīdymbwlātend*, *tīdscēawere*.^[4] In Modern English, however, the role of such synonyms has largely been replaced in favour of equivalents taken from Latin, French, and Greek. Familiarity with the etymology of groups of synonyms can give English speakers greater control over their linguistic register. See: List of Germanic and Latinate equivalents in English, Doublet (linguistics).

An exception to this and a peculiarity perhaps unique to a handful of languages, English included, is that the nouns for meats are commonly different from, and unrelated to, those for the animals from which they are produced, the animal commonly having a Germanic name and the meat having a French-derived one. Examples include: *deer* and *venison*; *cow* and *beef*; *swine/pig* and *pork*; and *sheep/lamb* and *mutton*. This is assumed to be a result of the aftermath of the Norman conquest of England, where an Anglo-Norman-speaking elite were the consumers of the meat, produced by lower classes, which happened to be largely Anglo-Saxon, though this same duality can also be seen in other languages like French, which did not undergo such linguistic upheaval (e.g. *boeuf* "beef" vs. *vache* "cow"). With the exception of *beef* and *pork*, the distinction today is gradually becoming less and less pronounced (*venison* is commonly referred to simply as *deer meat*, *mutton* is *lamb*, and *chicken* is both the animal and the meat over the more traditional term *poultry*. (Use of the term *mutton*, however, remains, especially when referring to the meat of an older sheep, distinct from *lamb*; and *poultry* remains when referring to the meat of birds and fowls in general.)

There are Latinate words that are used in everyday speech. These words no longer appear Latinate and oftentimes have no Germanic equivalents. For instance, the words *mountain*, *valley*, *river*, *aunt*, *uncle*, *move*, *use*, *push* and *stay* ("to remain") are Latinate. Likewise, the inverse can occur: *acknowledge*, *meaningful*, *understanding*, *mindful*, *behaviour*, *forbearance*, *behoove*, *forestall*, *allay*, *rhyme*, *starvation*, *embodiment* come from Anglo-Saxon, and *allegiance*, *abandonment*, *debutant*, *feudalism*, *seizure*, *guarantee*, *disregard*, *wardrobe*, *disenfranchise*, *disarray*,

bandolier, bourgeoisie, debauchery, performance, furniture, gallantry are of Germanic origin, usually through the Germanic element in French, so it is oftentimes impossible to know the origin of a word based on its register.

English easily accepts technical terms into common usage and often imports new words and phrases. Examples of this phenomenon include contemporary words such as *cookie, Internet* and *URL* (technical terms), as well as *genre, über, lingua franca* and *amigo* (imported words/phrases from French, German, Italian, and Spanish, respectively). In addition, slang often provides new meanings for old words and phrases. In fact, this fluidity is so pronounced that a distinction often needs to be made between formal forms of English and contemporary usage.

Number of words in English

The *General Explanations* at the beginning of the *Oxford English Dictionary* states:

The Vocabulary of a widely diffused and highly cultivated living language is not a fixed quantity circumscribed by definite limits... there is absolutely no defining line in any direction: the circle of the English language has a well-defined centre but no discernible circumference.

The current FAQ for the *OED* further states:

How many words are there in the English language? There is no single sensible answer to this question. It's impossible to count the number of words in a language, because it's so hard to decide what actually counts as a word.^[5]

The vocabulary of English is undoubtedly vast, but assigning a specific number to its size is more a matter of definition than of calculation. Unlike other languages such as French (the Académie française), German (Rat für deutsche Rechtschreibung), Spanish (Real Academia Española) and Italian (Accademia della Crusca), there is no academy to define officially accepted words and spellings. Neologisms are coined regularly in medicine, science, technology and other fields, and new slang is constantly developed. Some of these new words enter wide usage; others remain restricted to small circles. Foreign words used in immigrant communities often make their way into wider English usage. Archaic, dialectal, and regional words might or might not be widely considered as "English".

The *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edition (*OED2*) includes over 600,000 definitions, following a rather inclusive policy:

It embraces not only the standard language of literature and conversation, whether current at the moment, or obsolete, or archaic, but also the main technical vocabulary, and a large measure of dialectal usage and slang (Supplement to the *OED*, 1933).^[6]

The editors of *Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged* (475,000 main headwords) in their preface, estimate the number to be much higher. It is estimated that about 25,000 words are added to the language each year.^[7]

The Global Language Monitor announced that the English language had crossed the 1,000,000-word threshold on June 10, 2009.^[8] The announcement was met with strong scepticism by linguists and lexicographers,^[9] though a number of non-specialist reports^{[10] [11]} accepted the figure uncritically.

Comparisons of the vocabulary size of English to that of other languages are generally not taken very seriously by linguists and lexicographers. Besides the fact that dictionaries will vary in their policies for including and counting entries,^[12] what is meant by a given language and what counts as a word do not have simple definitions. Also, a definition of word that works for one language may not work well in another,^[13] with differences in morphology and orthography making cross-linguistic definitions and word-counting difficult, and potentially giving very different results.^[14] Linguist Geoffrey K. Pullum has gone so far as to compare concerns over vocabulary size (and the notion that a supposedly larger lexicon leads to "greater richness and precision") to an obsession with penis length.^[15]

Word origins

One of the consequences of the French influence is that the vocabulary of English is, to a certain extent, divided between those words that are Germanic (mostly West Germanic, with a smaller influence from the North Germanic branch) and those that are "Latinate" (derived directly from Latin, or through Norman French or other Romance languages). The situation is further compounded, as French, particularly Old French and Anglo-French, were also contributors in English of significant numbers of Germanic words, mostly from the Frankish element in French (see *List of English Latinates of Germanic origin*).

The majority (estimates range from roughly 50%^[16] to more than 80%^[17]) of the thousand most common English words are Germanic. However, the majority of more advanced words in subjects such as the sciences, philosophy and mathematics come from Latin or Greek, with Arabic also providing many words in astronomy, mathematics, and chemistry.^[18]

Source of the most frequent 7,476 English words

	1st 100	1st 1,000	2nd 1,000	then on
Germanic	97%	57%	39%	36%
Italic	3%	36%	51%	51%
Hellenic	0	4%	4%	7%
Others	0	3%	6%	6%
Source: Nation 2001, p. 265				

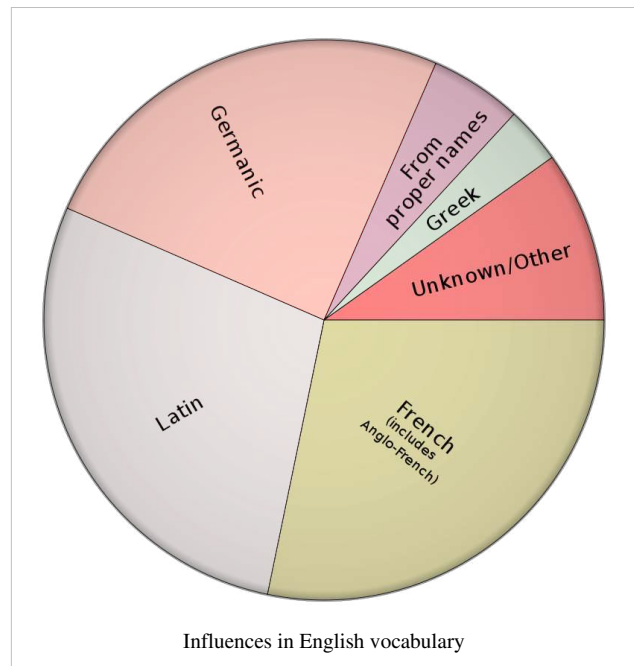
Numerous sets of statistics have been proposed to demonstrate the proportionate origins of English vocabulary. None, as of yet, is considered definitive by most linguists.

A computerised survey of about 80,000 words in the old *Shorter Oxford Dictionary* (3rd ed.) was published in *Ordered Profusion* by Thomas Finkenstaedt and Dieter Wolff (1973)^[19] that estimated the origin of English words as follows:

- *Langue d'oïl*, including French and Old Norman: 28.3%
- Latin, including modern scientific and technical Latin: 28.24%
- Germanic languages (including words directly inherited from Old English; does not include Germanic words coming from the Germanic element in French, Latin or other Romance languages): 25%
- Greek: 5.32%
- No etymology given: 4.03%
- Derived from proper names: 3.28%
- All other languages: less than 1%

A survey by Joseph M. Williams in *Origins of the English Language* of 10,000 words taken from several thousand business letters gave this set of statistics:^[20]

- French (*langue d'oïl*): 41%
- "Native" English: 33%
- Latin: 15%
- Old Norse: 2%



- Dutch: 1%
- Other: 10%

French origins

A large portion of English vocabulary is of French or Langues d'oïl origin, and was transmitted to English via the Anglo-Norman language spoken by the upper classes in England in the centuries following the Norman Conquest. Words of French origin include *competition*, *mountain*, *art*, *table*, *publicity*, *police*, *role*, *routine*, *machine*, *force*, and thousands of others, most of which have been anglicised to fit English rules of phonology, pronunciation and spelling, rather than those of French (with a few exceptions, for example, *façade* and *affaire de cœur*.)

Old Norse origins

Many words of Old Norse origin have entered the English language, primarily from the Viking colonisation of eastern and northern England between 800–1000 CE during the Danelaw. These include common words such as *anger*, *awe*, *bag*, *big*, *birth*, *blunder*, *both*, *cake*, *call*, *cast*, *cosy*, *cross*, *cut*, *die*, *dirt*, *drag*, *drown*, *egg*, *fellow*, *flat*, *flounder*, *gain*, *get*, *gift*, *give*, *guess*, *guest*, *gust*, *hug*, *husband*, *ill*, *kid*, *law*, *leg*, *lift*, *likely*, *link*, *loan*, *loose*, *low*, *mistake*, *odd*, *race (running)*, *raise*, *root*, *rotten*, *same*, *scale*, *scare*, *score*, *seat*, *seem*, *sister*, *skill*, *skin*, *skirt*, *skull*, *sky*, *stain*, *steak*, *sway*, *take*, *though*, *thrive*, *Thursday*, *tight*, *till (until)*, *trust*, *ugly*, *want*, *weak*, *window*, *wing*, *wrong*, the pronoun *they* (and its forms), and even the verb *are* (the present plural form of *to be*) through a merger of Old English and Old Norse cognates.^[21] More recent Scandinavian imports include *angstrom*, *fjord*, *geyser*, *kraken*, *litmus*, *nickel*, *ombudsman*, *saga*, *ski*, *slalom*, *smorgasbord*, and *tungsten*.

Dutch and Low German origins

Many words describing the navy, types of ships, and other objects or activities on the water are of Dutch origin. *Yacht (jacht)*, *skipper (schipper)*, *cruiser (kruiser)*, *flag (vlag)*, *freight (vracht)*, *furlough (verlof)*, *breeze (bries)*, *hoist (hijzen)*, *iceberg (ijsberg)*, *boom (boom)*, and *maelstrom (maalstroom)* are examples. Other words pertain to art and daily life: *easel (ezel)*, *etch (etsen)*, *slim (slim)*, *staple* (Middle Dutch *stapel* "market"), *slip* (Middle Dutch *slippen*), *landscape (landschap)*, *cookie (koekje)*, *curl (krul)*, *shock (schokken)*, *aloof (loef)*, *boss (baas)*, *brawl (brallen* "to boast"), *smack (smakken* "to hurl down"), *coleslaw (koolsla)*, *dope (doop* "dipping sauce"), *slender* (Old Dutch *slinder*), *slight* (Middle Dutch *slicht*), *gas (gas)*. Dutch has also contributed to English slang, e.g. *spook*, and the now obsolete *snyder* (tailor) and *stiver* (small coin).

Words from Low German include *trade* (Middle Low German *trade*), *smuggle (smuggeln)*, and *dollar (daler/thaler)*.

Writing system

Since around the 9th century, English has been written in the Latin alphabet, which replaced Anglo-Saxon runes. The spelling system, or orthography, is multilayered, with elements of French, Latin and Greek spelling on top of the native Germanic system; it has grown to vary significantly from the phonology of the language. The spelling of words often diverges considerably from how they are spoken.

Though letters and sounds may not correspond in isolation, spelling rules that take into account syllable structure, phonetics, and accents are 75% or more reliable.^[22] Some phonics spelling advocates claim that English is more than 80% phonetic.^[23] However, English has fewer consistent relationships between sounds and letters than many other languages; for example, the letter sequence *ough* can be pronounced in 10 different ways. The consequence of this complex orthographic history is that reading can be challenging.^[24]

It takes longer for students to become completely fluent readers of English than of many other languages, including French, Greek, and Spanish.^[25] "English-speaking children take up to two years more to learn reading than do children in 12 other European countries." (Professor Philip H K Seymour, University of Dundee, 2001)^[26] "[dyslexia] is twice as prevalent among dyslexics in the United States (and France) as it is among Italian dyslexics.

Again, this is seen to be because of Italian's 'transparent' orthography." (Eraldo Paulesu and 11 others. Science, 2001)^[26]

Basic sound-letter correspondence

IPA	Alphabetic representation	Dialect-specific
p	p	
b	b	
t	t, th (<i>rarely</i>) <i>thyme, Thames</i>	th <i>thing</i> (<i>African American, New York</i>)
d	d	th <i>that</i> (<i>African American, New York</i>)
k	c (+ a, o, u, consonants), k, ck, ch, qu (<i>rarely</i>) <i>conquer</i> , kh (<i>in foreign words</i>)	
g	g, gh, gu (+ a, e, i), gue (<i>final position</i>)	
m	m	
n	n	
ŋ	n (<i>before g or k</i>), ng	
f	f, ph, gh (<i>final, infrequent</i>) <i>laugh, rough</i>	th <i>thing</i> (<i>many forms of English language in England</i>)
v	v	th <i>with</i> (<i>Cockney, Estuary English</i>)
θ	th <i>thick, think, through</i>	
ð	th <i>that, this, the</i>	
s	s, c (+ e, i, y), sc (+ e, i, y), ç often c (<i>façade/facade</i>)	
z	z, s (<i>finally or occasionally medially</i>), ss (<i>rarely</i>) <i>possess, dessert</i> , word-initial x <i>xylophone</i>	
ʃ	sh, sch (some dialects) <i>schedule</i> (plus words of German origin), ti (before vowel) <i>portion</i> , ci/ce (before vowel) <i>suspicion, ocean</i> ; si/ssi (before vowel) <i>tension, mission</i> ; ch (<i>esp. in words of French origin</i>); rarely s/ss before u <i>sugar, issue</i> ; chsi in <i>fuchsia</i> only	
ʒ	medial si (before vowel) <i>division</i> , medial s (before "ur") <i>pleasure</i> , zh (<i>in foreign words</i>), z before u <i>azure</i> , g (<i>in words of French origin</i>) (+e, i, y) <i>genre</i> , j (<i>in words of French origin</i>) <i>bijou</i>	
x	kh, ch, h (<i>in foreign words</i>)	occasionally ch <i>loch</i> (<i>Scottish English, Welsh English</i>)
h	h (<i>syllable-initially, otherwise silent</i>), j (<i>in words of Spanish origin</i>) <i>jai alai</i>	
tʃ	ch, tch, t before u <i>future, culture</i>	t (+ u, ue, eu) <i>tune, Tuesday, Teutonic</i> (<i>several dialects – see Phonological history of English consonant clusters</i>)
dʒ	j, g (+ e, i, y), dg (+ e, i, consonant) <i>badge, judg(e)ment</i>	d (+ u, ue, ew) <i>dune, due, dew</i> (<i>several dialects – another example of yod coalescence</i>)
r	r, wr (<i>initial</i>) <i>wrangle</i>	
j	y (<i>initially or surrounded by vowels</i>), j <i>hallelujah</i>	
l	l	
w	w	

w	wh (<i>pronounced hw</i>)	Scottish and Irish English, as well as some varieties of American, New Zealand, and English English
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Written accents

Unlike most other Germanic languages, English has almost no diacritics except in foreign loanwords (like the acute accent in *café*), and in the uncommon use of a diaeresis mark (often in formal writing) to indicate that two vowels are pronounced separately, rather than as one sound (e.g. *naïve*, *Zoë*). Words such as *décor*, *café*, *résumé/resumé*, *entrée*, *fiancée* and *naïve* are frequently spelled both with or without diacritics.

Some English words retain diacritics to distinguish them from others, such as *animé*, *exposé*, *lamé*, *öre*, *pâté*, *piqué*, and *rosé*, though these are sometimes also dropped (for example, *résumé/resumé*, is often spelt *resume* in the United States). To clarify pronunciation, a small number of loanwords may employ a diacritic that does not appear in the original word, such as *maté*, from Spanish *yerba mate*, or *Malé*, the capital of the Maldives, following the French usage.

Formal written English

A version of the language almost universally agreed upon by educated English speakers around the world is called formal written English. It takes virtually the same form regardless of where it is written, in contrast to spoken English, which differs significantly between dialects, accents, and varieties of slang and of colloquial and regional expressions. Local variations in the formal written version of the language are quite limited, being restricted largely to the spelling differences between British and American English, along with a few minor differences in grammar and lexis.

Basic and simplified versions

To make English easier to read, there are some simplified versions of the language. One basic version is named *Basic English*, a constructed language with a small number of words created by Charles Kay Ogden and described in his book *Basic English: A General Introduction with Rules and Grammar* (1930). The language is based on a simplified version of English. Ogden said that it would take seven years to learn English, seven months for Esperanto, and seven weeks for Basic English. Thus, Basic English may be employed by companies that need to make complex books for international use, as well as by language schools that need to give people some knowledge of English in a short time.

Ogden did not include any words in Basic English that could be said with a combination of other words, and he worked to make the vocabulary suitable for speakers of any other language. He put his vocabulary selections through a large number of tests and adjustments. Ogden also simplified the grammar but tried to keep it normal for English users. Although it was not built into a program, similar simplifications were devised for various international uses.

Another version, Simplified English, exists, which is a controlled language originally developed for aerospace industry maintenance manuals. It offers a carefully limited and standardised^[27] subset of English. Simplified English has a lexicon of approved words and those words can only be used in certain ways. For example, the word *close* can be used in the phrase "Close the door" but not "do not go close to the landing gear".

See also

- Changes to Old English vocabulary
- English for Academic Purposes
- English language in Europe
- English language learning and teaching
- Language Report
- Lists of English words
- Teaching English as a foreign language
- The Adventure of English (film)
- The Story of English

References

Notes

- [1] Oxford English Dictionary, see entry "contract"
- [2] Oxford English Dictionary, see entry "civilisation"
- [3] For the processes and triggers of English vocabulary changes cf. *English and General Historical Lexicology* (by Joachim Grzega and Marion Schöner) (<http://www1.ku-eichstaett.de/SLF/EnglVglSW/OnOnMon1.pdf>)
- [4] Baugh, Cable, *A History of the English Language* Fifth Edition, 50.
- [5] "How many words are there in the English language?" (<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/page/howmanywords>). *Oxford Dictionaries Online*. Oxford University Press. . Retrieved 17 September 2010.
- [6] It went on to clarify,

Hence we exclude all words that had become obsolete by 1150 [the end of the Old English era]... Dialectal words and forms which occur since 1500 are not admitted, except when they continue the history of the word or sense once in general use, illustrate the history of a word, or have themselves a certain literary currency.

- [7] Kister, Ken. "Dictionaries defined." *Library Journal*, 6/15/92, Vol. 117 Issue 11, p43, 4p, 2bw
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External links

- Accents of English from Around the World (University of Edinburgh) (<http://www.soundcomparisons.com/>)
Hear and compare how the same 110 words are pronounced in 50 English accents from around the world – instantaneous playback online

Dictionaries

- Collection of English bilingual dictionaries (<http://dicts.info/dictlist1.php>)
- dict.org (<http://www.dict.org/>)
- Dictionary of American Regional English (<http://polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/dare/dare.html>)
- English language word roots, prefixes and suffixes (affixes) dictionary (<http://www.prefixsuffix.com/>)
- Oxford's online dictionary (<http://oxforddictionaries.com/>)
- Merriam-Webster's online dictionary (<http://www.m-w.com/>)
- Macquarie Dictionary Online (<http://www.macquariedictionary.com.au/>)

bjn: Bahasa Inggris gag: İngiliz dili ko: Англия кыв

History

History of the English language

English is a West Germanic language that originated from the Anglo-Frisian dialects brought to Britain by Germanic invaders from various parts of what is now northwest Germany and the Netherlands. Initially, Old English was a diverse group of dialects, reflecting the varied origins of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of England. One of these dialects, Late West Saxon, eventually came to dominate.

The original Old English language was then influenced by two further waves of invasion: the first by speakers of the Scandinavian branch of the Germanic language family, who conquered and colonized parts of Britain in the 8th and 9th centuries; the second by the Normans in the 11th century, who spoke Old Norman and ultimately developed an English variety of this called Anglo-Norman. These two invasions caused English to become "mixed" to some degree.

Cohabitation with the Scandinavians resulted in a significant grammatical simplification and lexical enrichment of the Anglo-Frisian core of English; the later Norman occupation led to the grafting onto that Germanic core of a more elaborate layer of words from the Romance languages (Latin-based languages). This Norman influence entered English largely through the courts and government. Thus, English developed into a "borrowing" language of great flexibility, resulting in an enormous and varied vocabulary.

Proto-English

The languages of Germanic peoples gave rise to the English language (the Angles, Saxons, Frisians, Jutes and possibly the Franks, who traded and fought with the Latin-speaking Roman Empire in the centuries-long process of the Germanic peoples' expansion into Western Europe during the Migration Period). Some Latin words for common objects entered the vocabulary of these Germanic peoples before their arrival in Britain and their subsequent formation of England.

The main source of information for the culture of the Germanic peoples (the ancestors of the English) in ancient times is Tacitus' *Germania*, written around 100 AD. While remaining conversant with Roman civilisation and its economy, including serving in the Roman military, they retained political independence. Some Germanic troops served in Britannia under the Romans. It is unlikely that Germanic settlement in Britain was intensified (except for Frisians) until the arrival of mercenaries in the 5th century as described by Gildas. As it was, the Angles, Saxons and Jutes arrived as Germanic pagans, independent of Roman control.

According to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, around the year 449, Vortigern, King of the Britons, invited the "Angle kin" (Angles allegedly led by the Germanic brothers Hengist and Horsa) to help him in conflicts with the Picts. In return, the Angles were granted lands in the southeast of England. Further aid was sought, and in response "came men of Ald Seaxum of Anglum of Iotum" (Saxons, Angles and Jutes). The *Chronicle* talks of a subsequent influx of settlers who eventually established seven kingdoms, known as the heptarchy. However, modern scholars view the figures of Hengist and Horsa as Euhemerized deities from Anglo-Saxon paganism, who ultimately stem from the religion of the Proto-Indo-Europeans.^[1]

Old English

The invaders' Germanic language displaced in some areas the indigenous Brythonic languages of what became England. The original Celtic languages remained in parts of Scotland, Wales and Cornwall (where Cornish was spoken into the 19th century). The dialects spoken by the Anglo-Saxons formed what is now called Old English. The most famous surviving work from the Old English period is the epic poem *Beowulf* composed by an unknown poet.

Old English did not sound or look like the Standard English of today. Any native English speaker of today would find Old English unintelligible without studying it as a separate language. Nevertheless, about half of the most commonly used words in Modern English have Old English roots. The words *be*, *strong* and *water*, for example, derive from Old English; and many non-standard dialects such as Scots and Northumbrian English have retained many features of Old English in vocabulary and pronunciation.^[2] Old English was spoken until sometime in the 12th or 13th century.^{[3] [4]}

Later, English was strongly influenced by the North Germanic language Old Norse, spoken by the Norsemen who invaded and settled mainly in the north-east of England (see Jórvík and Danelaw). The new and the earlier settlers spoke languages from different branches of the Germanic family; many of their lexical roots were the same or similar, although their grammars were more distinct.

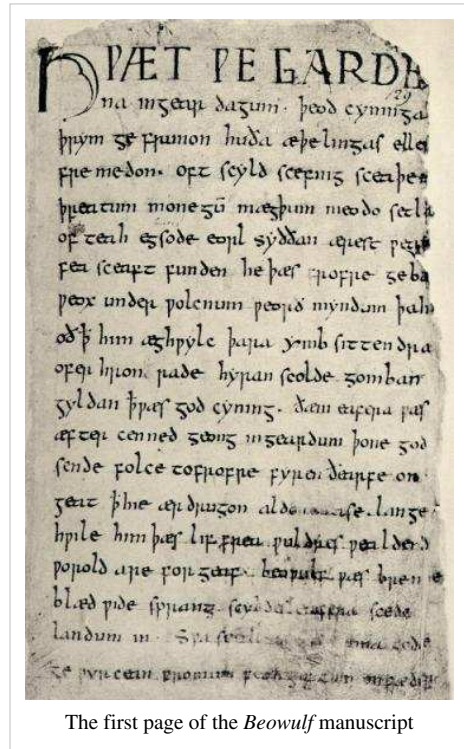
The Germanic language of these Old English-speaking inhabitants was influenced by contact with Norse invaders, which might have been responsible for some of the morphological simplification of Old English, including the loss of grammatical gender and explicitly marked case (with the notable exception of the pronouns). English words of Old Norse origin include *anger*, *bag*, *both*, *hit*, *law*, *leg*, *same*, *skill*, *sky*, *take*, and many others, possibly even including the pronoun *they*.

The introduction of Christianity added another wave of Latin and some Greek words. The Old English period formally ended sometime after the Norman conquest (starting in 1066 AD), when the language was influenced to an even greater extent by the Norman-French speaking Normans. The use of Anglo-Saxon to describe a merging of Anglian and Saxon languages and cultures is a relatively modern development.

Middle English

For about 300 years following the Norman Conquest in 1066, the Norman kings and their high nobility spoke only one of the *langues d'oïl* called Anglo-Norman, which was a variety of Old Norman used in England and to some extent elsewhere in the British Isles during the Anglo-Norman period and originating from a northern dialect of Old French, whilst English continued to be the language of the common people. Middle English was influenced by both Anglo-Norman and, later, Anglo-French (see Anglo-Norman language, "Characteristics").

Even after the decline of Norman, French retained the status of a formal or prestige language and had (with Norman) a significant influence on the language, which is visible in Modern English today (see English language, Word Origins and List of English words of French origin). A tendency for Norman-derived words to have more formal connotations has continued to the present day; most modern English speakers would consider a "cordial reception" (from French) to be more formal than a "hearty welcome" (Germanic). Another example is the very unusual construction of the words for animals being separate from the words for their meat: e.g., beef and pork (from the Norman *bœuf* and *porc*) being the products of 'cows' and 'pigs', animals with Germanic names.



The first page of the *Beowulf* manuscript

English was also influenced by the Celtic languages it was displacing, especially the Brittonic substrate, most notably with the introduction of the continuous aspect—a feature found in many modern languages but developed earlier and more thoroughly in English.^[5]

While the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* continued until 1154, most other literature from this period was in Old Norman or Latin. A large number of Norman words were taken into Old English, with many doubling for Old English words. The Norman influence is the hallmark of the linguistic shifts in English over the period of time following the invasion, producing what is now referred to as Middle English.

The most famous writer from the Middle English period was Geoffrey Chaucer, and *The Canterbury Tales* is his best-known work.

English literature started to reappear around 1200, when a changing political climate and the decline in Anglo-Norman made it more respectable. The Provisions of Oxford, released in 1258, was the first English government document to be published in the English language since the Conquest. In 1362, Edward III became the first king to address Parliament in English. By the end of that century, even the royal court had switched to English. Anglo-Norman remained in use in limited circles somewhat longer, but it had ceased to be a living language.

English spelling was also influenced by Norman in this period, with the /θ/ and /ð/ sounds being spelled *th* rather than with the Old English letters þ (thorn) and ð (eth), which did not exist in Norman. (These letters remain in the modern Icelandic alphabet, which is descended from the alphabet of Old Norse.

Early Modern English

Modern English is often dated from the Great Vowel Shift, which took place mainly during the 15th century. English was further transformed by the spread of a standardised London-based dialect in government and administration and by the standardising effect of printing. By the time of William Shakespeare (mid-late 16th century),^[6] the language had become clearly recognizable as Modern English. In 1604, the first English dictionary was published, the *Table Alphabeticall*.

English has continuously adopted foreign words, especially from Latin and Greek, since the Renaissance. (In the 17th century, Latin words were often used with the original inflections, but these eventually disappeared). As there are many words from different languages and English spelling is variable, the risk of mispronunciation is high, but remnants of the older forms remain in a few regional dialects, most notably in the West Country.

Modern English

In 1755, Samuel Johnson published the first significant English dictionary, his *Dictionary of the English Language*.

The main difference between Early Modern English and Late Modern English is vocabulary. Late Modern English has many more words, arising from two principal factors: firstly, the Industrial Revolution and technology created a need for new words; secondly, the British Empire at its height covered one quarter of the Earth's surface, and the English language adopted foreign words from many countries.

Historic English text samples

Old English

Beowulf lines 1 to 11, approximately AD 900

Hover mouse over the text for a translation

Hwæt! Wē Gār-Dena	in geārdagum,
þēodcýninga,	þrym gefrūnon,
hū ðā æþelingas	ellen fremedon.
Oft Scyld Scēfing	sceaþena þrēatum,
monegum mægþum,	meodosetla oftēah,
egsode eorlas.	Syððan ārest wearð
fēasceaft funden,	hē þæs frōfre gebād,
wēox under wolcnum,	weorðmyndum þāh,
oðþæt him æghwylc	þāra ymsittendra
ofer hronrāde	hýran scolde,
gomban gyldan.	Þæt wæs gōd cýning!

Which, as translated by Francis Gummere, reads:

Lo, praise of the prowess of people-kings
of spear-armed Danes, in days long sped,
we have heard, and what honor the athelings won!
Oft Scyld the Scefing from squadroned foes,
from many a tribe, the mead-bench tore,
awing the earls. Since erst he lay
friendless, a foundling, fate repaid him:
for he waxed under welkin, in wealth he throve,
till before him the folk, both far and near,
who house by the whale-path, heard his mandate,
gave him gifts: a good king he!

Here is a sample *prose* text, the beginning of *The Voyages of Othhere and Wulfstan*. The full text can be found at [The Voyages of Othhere and Wulfstan](#), at Wikisource.

Oththere sǣde his hlāforde, Ælfrēde cýninge, ðæt hē ealra Norðmonna norþmest būde. Hē cwæð þæt hē būde on þǣm lande norþweardum wiþ þā Westsǣ. Hē sǣde þēah þæt þæt land sīe swīþe lang norþ þonan; ac hit is eal wēste, būton on fēawum stōwum stycemælum wīciað Finnas, on huntode on wintra, ond on sumera on fiscaþe be þære sǣ. Hē sǣde þæt hē æt sumum cirre wolde fandian hū longe þæt land norþryhte læge, oþþe hwæðer ænig mon be norðan þǣm wēstenne būde. Þā fōr hē norþryhte be þǣm lande: lēt him ealne weg þæt wēste land on ðæt stēorbord, ond þā wīdsǣ on ðæt bæcbord þrīe dagas. Þā wæs hē swā feor norþ swā þā hwælhuntan firrest farað. Þā fōr hē þā giet norþryhte swā feor swā hē meahte on þǣm oþrum þrīm dagum gesiglau. Þā bēag þæt land, þær ēastryhte, oþþe sēo sǣ in on ðæt lond, hē nysse hwæðer, būton hē wisse ðæt hē ðær bād westanwindes ond hwōn norþan, ond siglde ðā east be lande swā swā hē meahte on fēower dagum gesiglan. Þā sceolde hē ðær bīdan ryhtnorþanwindes, for ðæm þæt land bēag þær sūþryhte, oþþe sēo sǣ in on ðæt land, hē nysse hwæþer.

Þā siglde hē þonan sūðryhte be lande swā swā hē meahthe on fīf dagum gesiglan. Ðā læg þær ān micel ēa ūp on þæt land. Ðā cirdon hīe ūp in on ðā ēa for þæm hīe ne dorston forþ bī þære ēa siglan for unfriþe; for þæm ðæt land wæs eall gebūn on ðpre healfe þære ēas. Ne mētte hē ær nān gebūn land, siþþan hē from his āgnum hām fōr; ac him wæs ealne weg wēste land on þæt stēorbord, būtan fiscerum ond fugelerum ond huntum, ond þæt wæron eall Finnas; ond him wæs āwīdsæ on þæt bæcbord. Þā Boermas heafdon sīþe wel gebūd hira land: ac hīe ne dorston þær on cuman. Ac þāra Terfinna land wæs eal wēste, būtan ðær huntan gewīcodon, oþþe fisceras, oþþe fugeleras.

This may be translated as:

Onthere said to his lord, King Alfred, that he of all Norsemen lived north-most. He quoth that he lived in the land northward along the North Sea. He said though that the land was very long from there, but it is all wasteland, except that in a few places here and there Finns [i.e. Sami] encamp, hunting in winter and in summer fishing by the sea. He said that at some time he wanted to find out how long the land lay northward or whether any man lived north of the wasteland. Then he traveled north by the land. All the way he kept the waste land on his starboard and the wide sea on his port three days. Then he was as far north as whale hunters furthest travel. Then he traveled still north as far as he might sail in another three days. Then the land bowed east (or the sea into the land — he did not know which). But he knew that he waited there for west winds (and somewhat north), and sailed east by the land so as he might sail in four days. Then he had to wait for due-north winds, because the land bowed south (or the sea into the land — he did not know which). Then he sailed from there south by the land so as he might sail in five days. Then a large river lay there up into the land. Then they turned up into the river, because they dared not sail forth past the river for hostility, because the land was all settled on the other side of the river. He had not encountered earlier any settled land since he travelled from his own home, but all the way waste land was on his starboard (except fishers, fowlers and hunters, who were all Finns). And the wide sea was always on his port. The Bjarmians have cultivated their land very well, but they did not dare go in there. But the Terfinn's land was all waste except where hunters encamped, or fishers or fowlers.

Middle English

From The Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer, 14th century:

Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote
 The droghte of March hath perced to the roote
 And bathed every veyne in swich licour,
 Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
 Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth
 Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
 The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
 Hath in the Ram his halfe cours yronne,
 And smale foweles maken melodye,
 That slepen al the nyght with open yē
 (So priketh hem Nature in hir corages);
 Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimages

Glossary:

- soote: sweet
- swich licour: such liquid
- Zephirus: the west wind (Zephyrus)

- eek: also (Dutch *ook*; German *auch*)
- holt: wood (German *Holz*)
- the Ram: Aries, the first sign of the Zodiac
- yronne: run (German *gerannt*)
- priketh hem Nature: Nature pricks them
- hir corages: their hearts

Early Modern English

From Paradise Lost by John Milton, 1667:

Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
 Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
 Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
 With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
 Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
 Sing, Heavenly Muse, that on the secret top
 Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
 That shepherd, who first taught the chosen seed,
 In the beginning how the Heavens and Earth
 Rose out of chaos: or if Sion hill
 Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flowed
 Fast by the oracle of God, I thence
 Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song,
 That with no middle Flight intends to soar
 Above the Aonian mount, whyle it pursues
 Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.

Modern English

Taken from Oliver Twist, 1838, by Charles Dickens:

The evening arrived: the boys took their places; the master in his cook's uniform stationed himself at the copper; his pauper assistants ranged themselves behind him; the gruel was served out, and a long grace was said over the short commons. The gruel disappeared, the boys whispered each other and winked at Oliver, while his next neighbours nudged him. Child as he was, he was desperate with hunger and reckless with misery. He rose from the table, and advancing, basin and spoon in hand, to the master, said, somewhat alarmed at his own temerity—

"Please, sir, I want some more."

The master was a fat, healthy man, but he turned very pale. He gazed in stupefied astonishment on the small rebel for some seconds, and then clung for support to the copper. The assistants were paralysed with wonder, and the boys with fear.

"What!" said the master at length, in a faint voice.

"Please, sir," replied Oliver, "I want some more."

The master aimed a blow at Oliver's head with the ladle, pinioned him in his arms, and shrieked aloud for the beadle.

See also

- Phonological history of the English language
- American and British English differences
- English phonology
- English studies
- Inkhorn debate
- Languages in the United Kingdom
- Middle English creole hypothesis
- Middle English declension
- History of the Scots language
- Changes to Old English vocabulary

Lists:

- List of dialects of the English language
- List of Germanic and Latinate equivalents
- Lists of English words of international origin

Notes

[1] Examples include Simek (2007:59—60) and Mallory (2005:135).

[2] "Geordie dialect" (<http://www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/sounds/case-studies/geordie/>). Bl.uk. 2007-03-12. . Retrieved 2010-06-19.

[3] "4.1 The change from Old English to Middle English" (<http://www.uni-kassel.de/fb8/misc/lfb/html/text/4-1frame.html>). Uni-kassel.de. . Retrieved 2010-06-19.

[4] *The Oxford history of English lexicography, Volume 1* By Anthony Paul Cowie

[5] Filppula, Markku, Juhani Klemola und Heli Pitkänen (eds.). 2002. *The Celtic Roots of English*. Joensuu: University of Joensuu, Faculty of Humanities.

[6] See Fausto Cercignani, *Shakespeare's Works and Elizabethan Pronunciation*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1981.

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Geographical distribution

English in computing

The English language is sometimes described as the lingua franca of computing. In comparison to other sciences, where Latin and Greek are the principal sources of vocabulary, Computer Science borrows more extensively from English. Due to the technical limitations of early computers, and the lack of international standards on the Internet, computer users were limited to using English and the Latin alphabet. However, this historical limitation is not relevant today. Most software products are localized in numerous languages and the use of the Unicode character encoding has resolved the problems with non-Latin alphabets.

Influence on other languages

The computing terminology of many languages borrows from English. Some language communities resist actively to that trend, and in other cases English is used extensively and more directly. This section gives some examples for the use of English terminology in other languages, and also mentions any notable differences.

Bulgarian

Both English and Russian have influence over Bulgarian computing vocabulary. However, in many cases the borrowed terminology is translated, and not transcribed phonetically. Combined with the use of the Cyrillic alphabet this can make it difficult to recognize loanwords. For example the Bulgarian term for motherboard is 'дънна платка' (IPA /danna platka/ or literally "bottom board").

- компютър /compiutar/ - computer
- твърд диск /tvard disk/ - hard disk
- дискета /disketa/ - floppy disk; like the French disquette
- уеб сайт /web sait/ - web site; but also "интернет страница" /internet stranitsa/

Faroese

The Faroese language has a sparse scientific vocabulary *based on the language itself*. Many Faroese scientific words are borrowed and/or modified versions of especially Nordic and English equivalents. The vocabulary is constantly evolving and thus new words often die out, and only a few survive and become widely used. Examples of successful words include e.g. "telda" (computer), "kurla" (at sign) and "ambætari" (server). List of Faroese-English-Danish IT words ^[1]

French

In French there are some generally accepted English loan-words, but there is also a distinct effort to avoid them. In France the Académie française is responsible for the standardisation of the language and often coins new technological terms. Some of them are accepted in practice, in other cases the English loanwords remain predominant. In Quebec OQLF has a similar function.

- email / mail (in Europe); *courriel* (mainly in Quebec); informally *mèl*; more formally "courrier électronique"
 - *pourriel* - Spam
 - *hameçonnage*, phishing - Phishing
 - *télécharger* - to download
-

- *site web* - web site
- *lien* - website hyper-link
- *base de données* - Database
- *caméra web* - Webcam
- *amorcer, démarrer, booter* - to boot
- *redémarrer, rebooter* - to reboot
- *arrêter, éteindre* - to shutdown
- *amorçable, bootable* - Bootable
- overclocking, *surfréquenceçage, surcadenceçage* - Overclocking
- watercooling: *refroidissement à l'eau*
- *tuning PC*: case modding

German

In German, English words are very often used as well:

- noun: Computer, Website, Software, E-Mail, Blog
- verb: downloaden, booten, crashen

Icelandic

The Icelandic language has its own vocabulary of scientific terms, still English borrowings exist. English or Icelandicised words are mostly used in casual conversations, whereas the Icelandic words might be longer or not widespread.

Russian

- History of computer hardware in Soviet Bloc countries
- Computer russification

Spanish

The English influence on the software industry and the internet in Latin America has borrowed significantly from the Castilian lexicon.

frequently untranslated, and their Spanish equivalent

- email: *correo electrónico*
- messenger: *mensajero*
- software: *logical*
- webcam: *cámara web*
- website: *página web, sitio web*
- blog: *bitácora*

Not translated

- web
- flog
- wiki

Undecided

Many computing terms in Spanish share a common root with their English counterpart. In these cases, both terms are understood, but the Spanish is preferred for formal use:

- mouse vs *ratón*
-

- net vs *red*

Character encoding

The early computer software and hardware had very little support for alphabets other than the Latin. As a result of this it was difficult or impossible to represent languages based on other scripts. The ASCII character encoding, created in the 1960s, only supported 256 different characters. With the use of additional software it was possible to provide support for some languages, for instance those based on the Cyrillic alphabet. However, complex-script languages like Chinese or Japanese need more characters than the 256 limit imposed by ASCII. Some computers created in the former USSR had native support for the Cyrillic alphabet.

The wide adoption of Unicode, and UTF-8 on the web, resolved most of these historical limitations. ASCII remains the de-facto standard for command interpreters, programming languages and text-based communication protocols.

- Mojibake - Common mistakes

Programming language

The syntax of most programming languages uses English keywords, and therefore it could be argued some knowledge of English is required in order to use them. However, it is important to recognize all programming languages are in the class of formal languages. They are very different from any natural language, including English.

Some examples of non-English programming languages:

- Although it uses English keywords, Ruby allows the use of Japanese characters in variable names, and other elements of the code.
- Arabic: ARLOGO
- Bangla: BangaBhasha
- Chinese: Chinese BASIC
- Dutch: Superlogo
- French: LSE, WinDev, Pascal (although the English version is more widespread)
- Hebrew: Hebrew Programming Language
- Icelandic: Fjölnir
- Indian: Hindawi Programming System
- Russia: Glagol
- Spanish: Lexico

Communication protocols

Many application protocols, especially those depending on widespread standardisation to be effective, use text strings for requests and parameters, rather than the binary values commonly used in lower layer protocols. The request strings are generally based on English words, although in some cases the strings are contractions or acronyms of English expressions, which renders them somewhat cryptic to anyone not familiar with the protocol, whatever their proficiency in English. Nevertheless, the use of word-like strings is a convenient mnemonic device that allows a person skilled in the art (and with sufficient knowledge of English) to execute the protocol manually from a keyboard, usually for the purpose of finding a problem with the service.

Examples:

- FTP: USER, PASS (password), PASV (passive), PORT, RETR (retrieve), STOR (store), QUIT
 - SMTP: HELO (hello), MAIL, RCPT (recipient), DATA, QUIT
 - HTTP: GET, PUT, POST, HEAD (headers), DELETE, TRACE, OPTIONS
-

It is notable that response codes, that is, the strings sent back by the recipient of a request, are typically numeric: for instance, in HTTP (and some borrowed by other protocols)

- **200 OK** request succeeded
- **301 Moved Permanently** to redirect the request to a new address
- **404 Not Found** the requested page does not exist

This is because response codes also need to convey unambiguous information, but can have various nuances that the requester may optionally use to vary its subsequent actions. To convey all such "sub-codes" with alphabetic words would be unwieldy, and negate the advantage of using pseudo-English words. Since responses are usually generated by software they do not need to be mnemonic. Numeric codes are also more easily analysed and categorised when they are processed by software, instead of a human testing the protocol by manual input.

Localization

BIOS

Many personal computers have a BIOS chip, displaying text in English during boot time.

Keyboard shortcut

Keyboard shortcuts are usually defined in terms of English keywords such as CTRL+F for find.

English on the World Wide Web

English is the largest language on the World Wide Web, with 35% of internet users. Please refer to the article for Internet linguistic patterns for more details.

English speakers

Web user percentages usually focus on raw comparisons of the first language of those who access the web. Just as important is a consideration of second- and foreign-language users; i.e., the first language of a user does not necessarily reflect which language he or she regularly employs when using the web.

Native speakers

English-language users appear to be a plurality of web users, consistently cited as around one-third of the overall (near one billion). This reflects the relative affluence of English-speaking countries and high Internet penetration rates in them.

This lead may be eroding due mainly to a rapid increase of Chinese users,^[2] which broadly parallels China's advance on other economic fronts. In fact, if first-language speakers are compared, Chinese ought, in time, to outstrip English by a wide margin (837+ million for Mandarin Chinese, 370+ million for English).

First-language users among other relatively affluent countries appear generally stable, the two largest being German and Japanese, which each have between 5% and 10% of the overall share.

As a foreign language

If a gradual decline in English first-language users is inevitable, it does not necessarily follow that English will not continue to be the language of choice for those accessing the World Wide Web. There is an enormous pool of English second-language speakers who employ the language in technical, governmental and educational spheres^[3] and access the Internet in English.

A classic example of this scenario is India, the world's second most populated country. With economic growth, English has begun exploding as the emerging lingua franca in India. In 1995 it was thought that perhaps only 4% of the population was truly fluent in English (still an impressive 40 million).^[4] A decade later, by 2005, India had the world's largest English-speaking and understanding population^[5] and second largest "Fluent English" speaking population (led only by the U.S.). It is expected to have the world's largest number of English speakers within a decade.^[6]

Chinese is rarely employed as a lingua franca outside of China by non-ethnic Chinese; even countries bordering the country or with large Chinese minorities (Malaysia) tend toward English as a commercial and educational language. Further, China is not truly monoglot: Standard Mandarin is official but different spoken variants of Chinese are often mutually unintelligible; the diaspora disproportionately speaks Cantonese. There is, however, an existing written standard that serves as a common written language.

In the future, then, English and Chinese may have roughly equal positions at the top of the overall web first-language users, but English will likely continue to dominate as the default choice for those accessing the World Wide Web in a second language.

Other world languages that could conceivably begin to challenge English include Spanish and Arabic, though it remains to be seen if these, too, will be largely isolated to first-language speakers on the Internet as is Chinese.

World Wide Web content

One widely quoted figure for the amount of web content in English is 80%.^[7] Other sources show figures five to fifteen points lower, though still well over 50%.^{[8] [9]} There are two notable facts about these percentages:

The English web content is greater than the number of first-language English users by as much as 2 to 1.

Given the enormous lead it already enjoys and its increasing use as a *lingua franca* in other spheres, English web content may continue to dominate even as English first-language Internet users decline. This is a classic positive feedback loop: new Internet users find it helpful to learn English and employ it on-line, thus reinforcing the language's prestige and forcing subsequent new users to learn English as well.

Certain other factors (some predating the medium's appearance) have propelled English into a majority web-content position. Most notable in this regard is the tendency for researchers and professionals to publish in English to ensure maximum exposure. The largest database of medical bibliographical information, for example, shows English was the majority language choice for the past forty years and its share has continually increased over the same period.^[10]

The fact that non-Anglophones regularly publish in English only reinforces the language's dominance. English has a rich technical vocabulary (largely because native and non-native speakers alike use it to communicate technical ideas) and many IT and technical professionals use English regardless of country of origin (Linus Torvalds, for instance, comments his code in English, despite being from Finland and having Swedish as his first language).

Notes

- [1] <http://www.fmn.fo/listar/teldord/teldord-f-e-d3.htm>
- [2] English grip on internet being eroded | Technology | Guardian Unlimited (http://blogs.guardian.co.uk/online/archives/2005/08/16/english_grip_on_internet_being_eroded.html)
- [3] NationMaster - English status (most recent) by country (http://www.nationmaster.com/graph-T/lan_eng_sta)
- [4] English in India - and Who Speaks English to Whom and When? (<http://www.postcolonialweb.org/india/hohenthal/5.2.html>)
- [5] ABC NewsRadio: wordwatch, English speakers (<http://www.abc.net.au/newsradio/txt/s1363471.htm>)
- [6] English as She's Spoke (<http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=5675>)
- [7] What percentage of the internet is in English? (http://www.englishenglish.com/english_facts_8.htm)
- [8] http://www.verisign.com/press_releases/pr/page_029135.html
- [9] English could snowball on Net TRN 112101 (http://www.trmmag.com/Stories/2001/112101/English_could_snowball_on_Net_112101.html)
- [10] Language and country preponderance trends in MEDLINE and its causes (<http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=1175804>)

External links

News and books

- Online English grammar exercises and handouts for beginners (<http://www.clearbluerecords.com/esl>)
- Wikinews
- AllYouCanRead.com -28,000 Newspapers and Magazines (<http://www.allyoucanread.com/>)
- Google News (<http://news.google.com>) (select country next to "Top Stories")
- Newspapers Online (<http://www.newspapers.com>)
- Online Newspapers (<http://www.onlinenewspapers.com>)
- Newseum (<http://www.newseum.org>) Today's front pages from 300 newspapers
- Project Gutenberg (<http://www.gutenberg.org/>)
- Wikibooks
- Wikisource (public domain documents)
- Simple English Wikipedia (<http://simple.wikipedia.org>), intended for novices of the language
- Online English Tools (<http://www.online-utility.org/english/index.jsp>)
- English grammar and vocabulary tests and exercises for ESL students (<http://www.learnenglishfeelgood.com>)

Future of global English

- English Next (<http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-research-englishnext.htm>) Critical analysis by David Graddol for the British Council

Radio

- Radio Locator (<http://www.radio-locator.com>)
- European English Language Radio Stations (<http://www.englishradio.co.uk>)
- Public Radio (<http://publicradiofan.com/>)

International English

International English is the concept of the English language as a global means of communication in numerous dialects, and also the movement towards an international standard for the language. It is also referred to as **Global English**,^[1] **World English**, **Common English**, **Continental English** or **General English**. Sometimes these terms refer simply to the array of varieties of English spoken throughout the world.

Sometimes "international English" and the related terms above refer to a desired standardisation, i.e. Standard English; however, there is no consensus on the path to this goal.

Historical context

The modern concept of International English does not exist in isolation, but is the product of centuries of development of the English language.

The English language evolved from a set of West Germanic dialects spoken by the Angles and Saxons, who arrived from the Continent in the 5th Century. Those dialects came to be known as *Englisc* (literally "Anglish"), the language today referred to as Anglo-Saxon or Old English (the language of the poem *Beowulf*). English is thus more closely related to West Frisian than to any other modern language, although less than a quarter of the vocabulary of Modern English is shared with West Frisian or other West Germanic languages because of extensive borrowings from Norse, Norman, Latin, and other languages. It was during the Viking invasions of the Anglo-Saxon period that Old English was influenced by contact with Norse, a group of North Germanic dialects spoken by the Vikings, who came to control a large region in the North of England known as the Danelaw. Vocabulary items entering English from Norse (including the pronouns *she*, *they*, and *them*) are thus attributable to the on-again-off-again Viking occupation of Northern England during the centuries prior to the Norman Conquest (see, e.g., Canute the Great). Soon after the Norman Conquest of 1066, the *Englisc* language ceased being a literary language (see, e.g., *Ormulum*) and was replaced by Anglo-Norman as the written language of England. During the Norman Period, English absorbed a significant component of French vocabulary (approximately one-third of the vocabulary of Modern English) With this new vocabulary, additional vocabulary borrowed from Latin (with Greek, another approximately one-third of Modern English vocabulary, though some borrowings from Latin and Greek date from later periods), a simplified grammar, and use of the orthographic conventions of French instead of Old English orthography, the language became Middle English (the language of Chaucer). The "difficulty" of English as a written language thus began in the High Middle Ages, when French orthographic conventions were used to spell a language whose original, more suitable orthography had been forgotten after centuries of nonuse. During the late medieval period, King Henry V of England (lived 1387-1422) ordered the use of the English of his day in proceedings before him and before the government bureaucracies. That led to the development of Chancery English, a standardized form used in the government bureaucracy. (The use of so-called Law French in English courts continued through the Renaissance, however.)

The emergence of English as a language of Wales results from the incorporation of Wales into England and also dates from approximately this time period. Soon afterward, the development of printing by Caxton and others accelerated the development of a standardised form of English. Following a change in vowel pronunciation that marks the transition of English from the medieval to the Renaissance period, the language of the Chancery and Caxton became Early Modern English (the language of Shakespeare's day) and with relatively moderate changes eventually developed into the English language of today. Scots, as spoken in the lowlands and along the east coast of Scotland, developed independently from Modern English and is based on the Northern dialects of Anglo-Saxon, particularly Northumbrian, which also serve as the basis of Northern English dialects such as those of Yorkshire and Newcastle upon Tyne. Northumbria was within the Danelaw and therefore experienced greater influence from Norse than did the Southern dialects. As the political influence of London grew, the Chancery version of the language developed into a written standard across Great Britain, further progressing in the modern period as Scotland became

united with England as a result of the Acts of Union of 1707.

There have been two introductions of English to Ireland, a medieval introduction that led to the development of the now-extinct Yola dialect and a modern introduction in which Hibernian English largely replaced Irish as the most widely spoken language during the 19th century, following the Act of Union of 1800. Received Pronunciation (RP) is generally viewed as a 19th century development and is not reflected in North American English dialects, which are based on 18th Century English.

The establishment of the first permanent English-speaking colony in North America in 1607 was a major step towards the globalisation of the language. British English was only partially standardised when the American colonies were established. Isolated from each other by the Atlantic Ocean, the dialects in England and the colonies began evolving independently.

In the 19th century, the standardisation of British English was more settled than it had been in the previous century, and this relatively well-established English was brought to Africa, Asia and Oceania. It developed both as the language of English-speaking settlers from Britain and Ireland, and as the administrative language imposed on speakers of other languages in the various parts of the British Empire. The first form can be seen in New Zealand English, and the latter in Indian English. In Europe English received a more central role particularly since 1919, when the Treaty of Versailles was composed not only in French, the common language of diplomacy at the time, but, under special request from American president Woodrow Wilson, also in English - a major milestone in the globalization of English.

The English-speaking regions of Canada and the Caribbean are caught between historical connections with the UK and the Commonwealth, and geographical and economic connections with the U.S. In some things, and more formally, they tend to follow British standards, whereas in others, especially commercial, they follow the U.S. standard.

Methods of promotion

Unlike proponents of constructed languages, International English proponents face on the one hand the belief that English already is a world language (and as such, nothing needs to be done to promote it further) and, on the other, the belief that an international language would inherently need to be a constructed one (e.g. Esperanto). In such an environment, at least four basic approaches have been proposed or employed toward the further expansion or consolidation of International English, some in contrast with, and others in opposition to, methods used to advance constructed international auxiliary languages.

1. Laissez-faire approach. This approach is taken either out of ignorance of the other approaches or out of a belief that English will more quickly (or with fewer objections) become a more fully international language without any specific global legislation.
2. Institutional sponsorship and grass-roots promotion of language programs. Some governments have promoted the spread of the English language through sponsorship of English language programs abroad, without any attempt to gain formal international endorsement, as have grass-roots individuals and organizations supporting English (whether through instruction, marketing, etc.).
3. National legislation. This approach encourages countries to enshrine English as having at least some kind of official status, in the belief that this would further its spread and could include more countries over time.
4. International legislation. This approach involves promotion of the future holding of a binding international convention (perhaps to be under the auspices of such international organizations as the United Nations or Inter-Parliamentary Union) to formally agree upon an official international auxiliary language which would then be taught in all schools around the world, beginning at the primary level. While this approach allows for the possibility of an alternative to English being chosen (due to its necessarily democratic approach), the approach also allows for the eventuality that English would be chosen by a sufficient majority of the proposed convention's delegates so as to put international opinion and law behind the language and thus to consolidate it as a full official

world language.

English as a global language

Braj Kachru divides the use of English into three concentric circles.

The *inner circle* is the traditional base of English and includes countries such as the United Kingdom and Ireland and, loosely, the (historically mainly white) former colonies: the United States, Australia, New Zealand, some islands of the Caribbean, and the anglophone population of Canada. (South Africa is regarded as a special case). English is the native language or mother tongue of most people in these countries.

In the *outer circle* are those countries where English has official or historical importance ("special significance"). This means most of the Commonwealth of Nations (the former British Empire), including populous countries such as India, Pakistan and Nigeria, and others, such as the Philippines, under the sphere of influence of English speaking countries. Here English may serve as a useful lingua franca between ethnic and language groups. Higher education, the legislature and judiciary, national commerce and so on may all be carried out predominantly in English.

The *expanding circle* refers to those countries where English has no official role, but nonetheless is important for certain functions, notably international business. This use of English as a lingua franca by now includes most of the rest of the world not categorised above.

A recent development is the role of English as a lingua franca between speakers of the mutually intelligible Scandinavian languages (Danish, Norwegian and Swedish). Older generations of Scandinavians would use and understand each others' mother tongue without problems. However today's younger generations lack the same understanding and some have begun using English as the language of choice.^[2]

Research on English as a Lingua Franca in the sense of "English in the Expanding Circle" is comparatively recent. Linguists who have been active in this field are Jennifer Jenkins, Barbara Seidlhofer, Christiane Meierkord and Joachim Grzega.

English as a lingua franca in foreign language teaching

English as an additional language (EAL) usually is based on the standards of either American English or British English. English as an international language (EIL) is EAL with emphasis on learning different major dialect forms; in particular, it aims to equip students with the linguistic tools to communicate internationally. Roger Nunn considers different types of competence in relation to the teaching of English as an International Language, arguing that linguistic competence has yet to be adequately addressed in recent considerations of EIL.^[3]

Several models of "simplified English" have been suggested for teaching English as a foreign language:

- Basic English, developed by Charles Kay Ogden (and later also I. A. Richards) in the 1930s, a recent revival has been initiated by Bill Templer
- Threshold Level English, developed by van Ek and Alexander
- Globish, developed by Jean-Paul Nerrière
- Basic Global English, developed by Joachim Grzega

Furthermore, Randolph Quirk and Gabriele Stein thought about a Nuclear English, which, however, has never been fully developed.

Varying concepts

Universality and flexibility

International English sometimes refers to English as it is actually being used and developed in the world; as a language owned not just by native speakers, but by all those who come to use it.

Basically, it covers the English language at large, often (but not always or necessarily) implicitly seen as standard. It is certainly also commonly used in connection with the acquisition, use, and study of English as the world's lingua franca ('TEIL: Teaching English as an International Language'), and especially when the language is considered as a whole in contrast with *British English*, *American English*, *South African English*, and the like. — McArthur (2002, p. 444–445)

It especially means English words and phrases generally understood throughout the English-speaking world as opposed to localisms. The importance of non-native English language skills can be recognized behind the long-standing joke that the international language of science and technology is broken English.

Neutrality

International English reaches towards cultural neutrality. This has a practical use:

"What could be better than a type of English that saves you from having to re-edit publications for individual regional markets! Teachers and learners of English as a second language also find it an attractive idea — both often concerned that their English should be neutral, without American or British or Canadian or Australian coloring. Any regional variety of English has a set of political, social and cultural connotations attached to it, even the so-called 'standard' forms." — Peters (2004, *International English*)

According to this viewpoint, International English is a concept of English that minimizes the aspects defined by either the colonial imperialism of Victorian Britain or the so-called "cultural imperialism" of the 20th century United States. While British colonialism laid the foundation for English over much of the world, International English is a product of an emerging world culture, very much attributable to the influence of the United States as well, but conceptually based on a far greater degree of cross-talk and linguistic transculturation, which tends to mitigate both U.S. influence and British colonial influence.

The development of International English often centers on academic and scientific communities, where formal English usage is prevalent, and creative use of the language is at a minimum. This formal International English allows entry into Western culture as a whole and Western cultural values in general.

Opposition

The continued growth of the English language itself is seen by many as a kind of cultural imperialism, whether it is English in one form or English in two slightly different forms.

Robert Phillipson argues against the possibility of such neutrality in his *Linguistic Imperialism* (1992). Learners who wish to use purportedly correct English are in fact faced with the dual standard of American English and British English, and other less known standard Englishes (namely Australian, Scots and Canadian).

Edward Trimnell, author of *Why You Need a Foreign Language & How to Learn One* (2005) argues that the international version of English is only adequate for communicating basic ideas. For complex discussions and business/technical situations, English is not an adequate communication tool for non-native speakers of the language. Trimnell also asserts that native English-speakers have become "dependent on the language skills of others" by placing their faith in international English.

Appropriation theory

There are also some who reject both linguistic imperialism and David Crystal's theory of the neutrality of English. They argue that the phenomenon of the global spread of English is better understood in the framework of appropriation (e.g. Spichtinger 2000), that is, English used for local purposes around the world. Demonstrators in non-English speaking countries often use signs in English to convey their demands to TV-audiences around the globe, for instance.

In English language teaching Bobda shows how Cameroon has moved away from a mono-cultural, Anglo-centered way of teaching English and has gradually appropriated teaching material to a Cameroonian context. Non Western-topics treated are, for instance, the rule of Emirs, traditional medicine or polygamy (1997:225). Kramsch and Sullivan (1996) describe how Western methodology and textbooks have been appropriated to suit local Vietnamese culture. The Pakistani textbook "Primary Stage English" includes lessons such as "Pakistan My Country", "Our Flag", or "Our Great Leader" (Malik 1993: 5,6,7) which might well sound jingoistic to Western ears. Within the native culture, however, establishing a connection between ELT, patriotism and Muslim faith is seen as one of the aims of ELT, as the chairman of the Punjab Textbook Board openly states: "The board...takes care, through these books to inoculate in the students a love of the Islamic values and awareness to guard the ideological frontiers of your [the students] home lands" (Punjab Text Book Board 1997).

Many Englishes

There are many difficult choices that have to be made if there is to be further standardisation of English in the future. These include the choice over whether to adopt a current standard, or move towards a more neutral, but artificial one. A true International English might supplant both current American and British English as a variety of English for international communication, leaving these as local dialects, or would rise from a merger of General American and standard British English with admixture of other varieties of English and would generally replace all these varieties of English.

We may, in due course, all need to be in control of two standard Englishes—the one which gives us our national and local identity, and the other which puts us in touch with the rest of the human race. In effect, we may all need to become bilingual in our own language. — David Crystal (1988: p. 265)

This is the situation long faced by many users of English who possess a 'non-standard' dialect of English as their birth tongue but have also learned to write (and perhaps also speak) a more standard dialect. Many academics often publish material in journals requiring different varieties of English and change style and spellings as necessary without great difficulty.

As far as spelling is concerned, the differences between American and British usage became noticeable due to the first influential lexicographers (dictionary writers) on each side of the Atlantic. Samuel Johnson's dictionary of 1755 greatly favoured Norman-influenced spellings such as *centre* and *colour*; on the other hand, Noah Webster's first guide to American spelling, published in 1783, preferred spellings like *center* and the Latinate *color*. The difference in strategy and philosophy of Johnson and Webster are largely responsible for the main division in English spelling that exists today. However, these differences are extremely minor. Spelling is but a small part of the differences between dialects of English, and may not even reflect dialect differences at all (except in phonetically spelled dialogue). International English refers to much more than an agreed spelling pattern.

Dual standard

Two approaches to International English are the individualistic and inclusive approach and the new dialect approach. The individualistic approach gives control to individual authors to write and spell as they wish (within purported standard conventions) and to accept the validity of differences. The *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*, published in 1999, is a descriptive study of both American and British English in which each chapter follows individual spelling conventions according to the preference of the main editor of that chapter.

The new dialect approach appears in *The Cambridge Guide to English Usage* (Peters, 2004) which attempts to avoid any language bias and accordingly uses an idiosyncratic international spelling system of mixed American and British forms (but tending to prefer the more phonetic American English spellings).

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Notes

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- [6] <http://www.ling.ed.ac.uk/~pgc/archive/2000/subs/elizabeth.ps>
- [7] <http://www1.ku-eichstaett.de/SLF/EngluVglSW/ELiX/grzega-053.pdf>
- [8] <http://www.eurolinguistix.com>
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- [10] On Basic Global English cf. also the press releases accessible at the Basic Global English website (<http://www.basicglobalenglish.com>)
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See also

- English language learning and teaching
- World Englishes

World language

A **world language** is a language spoken internationally, which is learned by many people as a second language. A world language is not only characterized by the number of its speakers (native or second language speakers), but also by its geographical distribution, and its use in international organizations and in diplomatic relations.^[1] ^[2] In this respect, major world languages are dominated by languages of European origin. The historical reason for this is the period of European colonialism. World languages originating with historical colonial empires include English, Spanish, Portuguese and French.

The international prominence of Arabic has its historical reason in the medieval Islamic conquests and the subsequent Arabization of the Middle East, and also exists as a liturgical language amongst Muslim communities outside of the Arab World. Standard Mandarin is the direct replacement of Classical Chinese which was an important historical lingua franca in Far East Asia until the early 20th century, and today serves the function of providing a common spoken language between speakers of different and mutually unintelligible Chinese spoken languages not only within China proper (between the Han Chinese and other unrelated ethnic groups), but in overseas Chinese communities as well as being widely taught as a second language internationally. Russian was used in the Russian empire and the Soviet Union, and today is in use and widely understood in areas of Central and Eastern Europe, and Northern and Central Asia which were formerly part of the Soviet Union, or of the former Soviet bloc, and it remains the lingua franca in the Commonwealth of Independent States. German served as a lingua franca in large portions of Europe for centuries, mainly the Holy Roman Empire and later the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It remains an important second language in much of Central and Eastern Europe, and in the international scientific community.

Other major languages are not widely used across several continents, but have had an international significance as the *lingua franca* of a historical empire. These include Greek in the Hellenistic world after the conquests of Alexander the Great, and in the territories of the Byzantine Empire; Latin in the Roman Empire and previously as the standard liturgical language for the Catholic faithful worldwide; Classical Chinese in East Asia during the Imperial era of Chinese history; Persian (or "fars", as it is known in the Persian language) during ancient and medieval incarnations of various succeeding Persian Empires, and once served as the second lingua franca of the Islamic World after Arabic^[3]; Sanskrit during the ancient and medieval historical periods of various states in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia, and like Latin an important liturgical language of the Vedic religions.

The major languages of the Indian subcontinent have numbers of speakers comparable to those of major world languages primarily due to the large population in the region rather than a supra-regional use of these languages, although Hindustani (including all Hindi dialects and Urdu) and to a lesser extent Tamil may fulfill the criteria in terms of supra-regional usage and international recognition.

As an example, the native speaking population of Bengali vastly outnumber those who speak French as a first language, and it is one of the most spoken languages (ranking fifth^[4] or sixth^[5]) in the world with nearly 230 million total speakers, and is known for its long and rich literary tradition. However, while French is spoken intercontinentally, is internationally recognized to be of high linguistic prestige and used as a diplomatic language and international commerce, as well as having a significant portion of second language speakers throughout the world, the overwhelming majority of Bengali speakers are native Bengali people, with little to no influence outside of its regionally limited *sprachraum* or language space.

History

Historical world languages include Sumerian, Akkadian, Old Aramaic, Koine Greek, Latin, Arabic, Sanskrit, Chinese, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, English, French and Russian.^[1]

The Romance languages bear testimony to the role of Latin as the *lingua franca* of the Roman Empire. Koine Greek was the "world language" of the Hellenistic period, but its distribution is not reflected in the distribution of Modern Greek due to the linguistic impact of the Slavic, Arabic and Turkic expansions. The distribution of the Turkic languages, in turn, are a legacy of the Turkic Khaganate.

Just as all the living world languages owe their status to historical imperialism, the suggestion of a given language as a world language or "universal language" has strong political implications. Thus, Russian was declared the "world language of internationalism" in Soviet literature, which at the same time denounced French as the "language of fancy courtiers" and English as the "jargon of traders".^[6] A number of international auxiliary languages have been introduced as prospective world languages, the most successful of them being Esperanto, but none of them can claim the status of a living world language. Many natural languages have been proffered as candidates for a global *lingua franca*, including Italian, Dutch, Hungarian, German and Malay.^[6]



Eastern Roman Empire - Koine Greek



Western Roman Empire - Vulgar Latin (Latin Europe)







Turkic Khaganate - Turkic languages

Living world languages



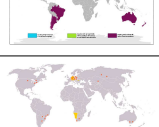

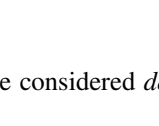
Some sources define a living world language as having the following properties:

- a large number of speakers
- a substantial fraction of non-native speakers (function as *lingua franca*)
- official status in several countries
- a linguistic community not defined strictly along ethnic lines (multiethnic, pluricentric language)
- one or more standard registers which are widely taught as a foreign language
- association with linguistic prestige
- use in international trade relations
- use in international organizations
- use in the academic community
- significant body of literature

World languages in the strictest sense are:^{[1] [7] [8]}

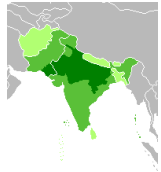



Language	Native speakers ^[9]	Total speakers	Official Status Distribution	Official Status Maps
English	328 M	1800 M ^{[10] [11]}	Anglosphere	
Spanish (Castilian)	329 M	495 M ^[12]	Hispanosphere	
Portuguese	178 M	230 M ^[13]	Lusosphere	
French	68 M	200 M ^[14]	Francophonie	



Other sources denote the following languages as world languages, whilst stricter sources list them as supra-regional languages:^[2]

Language	Native speakers ^[9]	Total speakers	Official Status Distribution	Official Status Maps
Chinese	845 M	1345 M ^[15]	Sinosphere	
Arabic	221 M	325 M ^[16]	Arab world	
Russian	144 M	275 M	Russophone	
German	90 M	180 M	German-speaking Europe	
Dutch and Afrikaans	27 M	45 M	Dutch-speaking world	

Other supra-regional languages

Other languages of supra-regional importance which fail some of the other criteria to be considered *de facto* world languages include:

Language	Native speakers ^[9]	Total speakers	Official Status Distribution	Official Status Maps
Hindustani (Hindi and Urdu)	460 M	650 M ^[17]	Indian subcontinent (Hindi belt, Pakistan)	
Malay and Indonesian	60 M	176 M - 250 M	Malay Archipelago	
Persian	70 M	144 M	Greater Iran	
Tamil	68 M	77 M	South Asia	

Italian	60 M	70 M	Italy and adjacent regions	
Swahili	5 - 10 M	50+ M	East Africa	

Two languages with a number of speakers in excess of 100 million, Japanese and Bengali, are not listed. Although considered to be some of the most internationally significant languages along with the listed world languages^[18], they are not considered world languages *per se* - Japan for example is almost ethnically, culturally and linguistically homogeneous, thus Japanese does not have much history as a *lingua franca* amongst communities who do not share a mother tongue or first language; their overseas communities are strongly tied to ethnicity; Bengali is not as widely taught as a foreign language as Japanese, where international interest since the 1980s have prompted many major universities as well as a number of secondary and even primary schools worldwide to offer courses in the language; and at least in the present, these languages exert a regionally limited sphere of influence;^[19]).

Notes

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- [14] Francophonie (<http://www.francophonie.org/English.html>)
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- [16] *Ethnologue* (1999) (http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=arb)
- [17] figures are based on the 1991 census of India. They are highly unreliable due to the huge population growth in the area.
- [18] The World's 10 most influential Languages (<http://www.andaman.org/BOOK/reprints/weber/rep-weber.htm>)
- [19] c.f. Pei p. 15

See also

- List of languages by number of speakers
- Ethnologue list of most spoken languages
- National language
- Universal language
- Lingua franca
- International English
- World religion
- World population
- World economy
- World Englishes
- Intercontinental
- International auxiliary language

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- David Crystal, *English as a Global Language* (2003), ISBN 0-521-53032-6.
- Clare Mar-Molinero, *The Politics of Language in the Spanish-speaking World* (2000), ISBN 0-415-15655-6.
- George Weber, *The World's 10 most influential Languages* (<http://www.andaman.org/BOOK/reprints/weber/rep-weber.htm>)

External links

- English 'world language' forecast (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/4080401.stm>) (BBC, December 2004)
- World Language Maps (http://www.allcountries.org/maps/world_language_maps.html)
- 1903 article - *Are We To Have An International Language?* (<http://books.google.com/books?id=ym0AAAAAYAAJ&printsec=titlepage#PPA192,M2>)

Phonology

English phonology

English phonology is the study of the phonology (i.e., the sound system) of the English language. Like all other languages, spoken English has wide variation in its pronunciation both diachronically and synchronically from dialect to dialect. This variation is especially salient in English, because the language is spoken over such a wide territory, being the predominant language in Australia, Canada, the Commonwealth Caribbean, Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States, in addition to being spoken as a first or second language by people in countries on every continent, notably South Africa and India. In general, the regional dialects of English are mutually intelligible.

Although there are many dialects of English, the following are usually used as prestige or standard accents: Received Pronunciation for the United Kingdom, General American for the United States and General Australian for Australia.

Phonemes

See IPA chart for English dialects for concise charts of the English phonemes.

The number of speech sounds in English varies from dialect to dialect, and any actual tally depends greatly on the interpretation of the researcher doing the counting. The *Longman Pronunciation Dictionary* by John C. Wells, for example, using symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet, denotes 24 consonants and 23 vowels used in Received Pronunciation, plus two additional consonants and four additional vowels used in foreign words only. For General American, it provides for 25 consonants and 19 vowels, with one additional consonant and three additional vowels for foreign words. The *American Heritage Dictionary*, on the other hand, suggests 25 consonants and 18 vowels (including r-colored vowels) for American English, plus one consonant and five vowels for non-English terms [1].

Consonants

The following table shows the consonant phonemes found in most dialects of English. When consonants appear in pairs, fortis consonants (i.e., aspirated or voiceless) appear on the left and lenis consonants (i.e., lightly voiced or voiced) appear on the right:

Consonant phonemes of English

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar ²	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Nasal ¹	m			n			ŋ	
Plosive	p b			t d			k ɡ	
Affricate					tʃ dʒ			
Fricative		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ		(x) ³	h
Approximant				ɹ ^{1, 2, 5}		j	w ⁴	
Lateral				l ^{1, 6}				

1. Nasals and liquids may be syllabic in unstressed syllables, though these may be analyzed phonemically as /əC/.
2. Postalveolar consonants are usually labialized (e.g., [ʃ^w]), as is word-initial or pre-tonic /r/, though this is rarely transcribed.
3. The voiceless velar fricative /x/ is dialectal, occurring largely in Scottish English. In other dialects, words with these sounds are pronounced with /k/. It may appear in recently-domiciled words such as *chutzpah*.
4. The sequence /hw/, a voiceless labiovelar approximant [h^w], is sometimes considered an additional phoneme. For most speakers, words that historically used to have these sounds are now pronounced with /w/; the phoneme /hw/ is retained, for example, in much of the American South, Scotland, and Ireland.
5. Depending on dialect, /r/ may be an alveolar approximant [ɹ], postalveolar approximant, or labiodental approximant.
6. Many dialects have two allophones of /l/—the "clear" L and the "dark" or velarized L. In some dialects, /l/ may be always clear (e.g. Wales, Ireland, the Caribbean) or always dark (e.g. Scotland, most of North America, Australia, New Zealand).

/p/	pit	/b/	bit
/t/	tin	/d/	din
/k/	cut	/g/	gut
/tʃ/	cheap	/dʒ/	jeep
/f/	fat	/v/	vat
/θ/	thin	/ð/	then
/s/	sap	/z/	zap
/ʃ/	she	/ʒ/	measure
/x/	loch		
/w/	we	/m/	map
/l/	left	/n/	nap
/r/	run (also /r/, /ɹ/)	/j/	yes
/h/	ham	/ŋ/	bang

Allophones

Although regional variation is very great across English dialects, some generalizations can be made about pronunciation in all (or at least the vast majority) of English accents:

- The voiceless stops /p t k/ are aspirated at the beginnings of words (for example *tomato*) and at the beginnings of word-internal stressed syllables (for example *potato*). They are unaspirated after /s/ (*stan*, *span*, *scan*) and at the ends of syllables.
- For many people, /r/ is somewhat labialized in some environments, as in *reed* [r^wi:d] and *tree* [t^wi:]. In the latter case, the [t] may be slightly labialized as well.^[2]
- /h/ becomes [ç] before [j], as in *human* [ˈçju:mən] or [ˈçu:mən].

Vowels

The vowels of English differ considerably between dialects. Because of this, corresponding vowels may be transcribed with various symbols depending on the dialect under consideration. When considering English as a whole, no specific phonemic symbols are chosen over others; instead, lexical sets are used, each named by a word containing the vowel in question. For example, the vowel of the LOT set ("short o") is transcribed /ɒ/ in Received Pronunciation, /ɔ/ in Australian English, and /ɑ/ in General American. For an overview of these diaphonemic

correspondences, see IPA chart for English dialects.

	Front		Central		Back			Front		Central		Back	
	long	short	long	short	long	short		long	short	long	short	long	short
Close	i:	ɪ			u:	ʊ	Close	i:	ɪ	ɘ:			ʊ
Mid		ɛ	ɜ:	ə	ɔ:		Mid	e:	e	ɜ:	ə	o:	ɔ
Open		æ		ʌ	ɑ:	ɒ	Open	æ:	æ	a:	a		

The vowel of strut is closer to a Near-open central vowel ([ɘ]) in RP, though ʌ is still used for tradition (it was historically a back vowel) and because it is still back in other varieties. Roca & Johnson (1999:135)

The monophthong phonemes of General American differ in a number of ways from Received Pronunciation:

1. The central vowel of *nurse* is rhotic [ɝ] (also transcribed as a syllabic [ɹ]).
2. Speakers make a phonemic distinction between rhotic /ɝ/ and non-rhotic /ə/.
3. No distinction is made between /ɒ/ and /ɑ:/, nor for many speakers between these vowels and /ɔ:/.

Reduced vowels occur in some unstressed syllables. (Other unstressed syllables may have full vowels, which some dictionaries mark as secondary stress.) The number of distinctions made among reduced vowels varies by dialect. In some dialects vowels are centralized but otherwise kept mostly distinct, while in Australia, New Zealand and many US dialects all reduced vowels collapse to a schwa [ə]. In Received Pronunciation, there is a distinct high reduced vowel, which the OED writes ɘ.

- [ɪ]: roses (merged with [ə] in Australian and New Zealand English)
- [ə]: Rosa's, runner
- [ɪ]: bottle
- [ɪ]: button
- [ɪ]: rhythm

	RP	Australian	American	
			GA	Canadian
<i>low</i>	/əʊ/	/əʊ/	/oʊ/	
<i>loud</i>	/aʊ/	/æʊ/	/aʊ/	/aʊ/
<i>lout</i>				[əʊ] ¹
<i>lied</i>	/aɪ/	/ɑɛ/	/aɪ/	/aɪ/
<i>light</i>				[əɪ] ¹
<i>lane</i>	/eɪ/	/æɪ/	/eɪ/	
<i>loin</i>	/ɔɪ/	/oɪ/	/ɔɪ/	
<i>leer</i>	/ɪə/	/ɪə/	/ɪə/ ³	
<i>lair</i>	/ɛə/ ²	/e:/ ²	/ɛə/ ³	
<i>lure</i>	/ʊə/ ²	/ʊə/	/ʊə/ ³	

↳English diphthongs

1. Canadian English exhibits allophony of /aʊ/ and /aɪ/ called Canadian raising. This phenomenon is also realized (especially for /aɪ/) by many US speakers, notably in the Northeast, as well as in South Atlantic English and the Fens of eastern England. In some areas, especially the Northeast US, /aɪ/ actually shifts to /aɪ/.

2. In Received Pronunciation, the vowels in *lair* and *lure* may be monophthongized to [ɛ:] and [o:] respectively.^[5] Australian English speakers more readily monophthongize the former but it is listed here anyway.
3. In rhotic dialects, words like *pair*, *poor*, and *peer* can be analyzed as diphthongs, although other descriptions analyze them as vowels with /r/ in the coda.^[6]

Reduced vowels

Linguists such as Ladefoged^[7] and Bolinger^[8] argue that vowel reduction is phonemic in English, and that there are two "tiers" of vowels in English, full and reduced; traditionally many English dictionaries have attempted to mark the distinction by transcribing unstressed full vowels as having "secondary" stress, though this was later abandoned by the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Though full unstressed vowels may derive historically from stressed vowels, either because stress shifted over time (such as stress shifting away from the final syllable of French loan words in British English) or because of loss or shift of stress in compound words or phrases (*óverseas vóyage* from *overséas* or *óverséas* plus *vóyage*), the distinction is not one of stress but of vowel quality (Bolinger 1989:351), and over time, if the word is frequent enough, the vowel will tend to reduce.

English has up to five reduced vowels, though this varies with dialect and speaker. Schwa /ə/ is found in all dialects, and a rhotic schwa ("schwer") /ɚ/ is found in rhotic dialects. Less common is a high reduced vowel ("schwi") /ɪ/ (also "/ɨ/"); the two are distinguished by many people in *Rosa's* /'roʊzəz/ vs *roses* /'roʊzɪz/. More unstable is a rounded schwa, /ɘ/ (also /ə/); this contrasts for some speakers in *a mission* /ə'mɪʃən/, *emission* /ɪ'mɪʃən/, and *omission* /ə'mɪʃən/. In words like *following*, the following vowel is preceded by a [w] even in dialects which do not otherwise have a rounded schwa: ['fɒləwɪŋ, 'fɒləwɪŋ]. A high rounded schwa /ʊ/ (also "/ʊ/") may be found in words such as *into* /'ɪntʊ/, though in many dialects this is not distinguished from /ə/.

Though speakers vary, full and reduced unstressed vowels may contrast in pairs of words like *Shogun* /'ʃoʊɡʌn/ and *slogan* /'sloʊɡən/, *chickaree* /'tʃɪkəri:/ and *chicory* /'tʃɪkəri/, *Pharaoh* /'fɛəroʊ/ and *farrow* /'færoʊ/ (Bolinger 1989:348), *Bantu* /'bæntu:/ and *into* /'ɪntʊ/ (OED).

Allophones

- A distinction is made between tense and lax vowels in pairs like *beet/bit* and *bait/bet*, although the exact phonetic implementation of the distinction varies from accent to accent. However, this distinction collapses before [ŋ].
- Wherever /r/ originally followed a tense vowel or diphthong (in Early Modern English) a schwa offglide was inserted, resulting in centering diphthongs like [iə] in *beer* [biə], [uə] in *poor* [puə], [aɪə] in *fire* [faɪə], [aʊə] in *sour* [saʊə], and so forth. This phenomenon is known as *breaking*. The subsequent history depends on whether the accent in question is rhotic or not: In non-rhotic accents like RP the postvocalic [ɹ] was dropped, leaving [biə, puə, faɪə, saʊə] and the like (now usually transcribed [bɪə, pʊə] and so forth). In rhotic accents like General American, on the other hand, the [əɹ] sequence was coalesced into a single sound, a non-syllabic [ɚ], giving [biɚ, puɚ, faɪɚ, saʊɚ] and the like (now usually transcribed [bɪɹ, pʊɹ, faɪɹ, saʊɹ] and so forth). As a result, originally monosyllabic words like those just mentioned came to rhyme with originally disyllabic words like *seer*, *doer*, *higher*, *power*.
- In many (but not all) accents of English, a similar breaking happens to tense vowels before /l/, resulting in pronunciations like [piəɫ] for *peel*, [puəɫ] for *pool*, [peəɫ] for *pail*, and [poəɫ] for *pole*.

Transcription variants

The choice of which symbols to use for phonemic transcriptions may reveal theoretical assumptions or claims on the part of the transcriber. English "lax" and "tense" vowels are distinguished by a synergy of features, such as height, length, and contour (monophthong vs. diphthong); different traditions in the linguistic literature emphasize different features. For example, if the primary feature is thought to be vowel height, then the non-reduced vowels of General American English may be represented according to the table to the left and below. If, on the other hand, vowel length is considered to be the deciding factor, the symbols in the table to the below and center may be chosen (this

convention has sometimes been used because the publisher did not have IPA fonts available, though that is seldom an issue any longer.) The rightmost table lists the corresponding lexical sets.

General American full vowels, vowel height distinctive			General American full vowels, vowel length distinctive			Lexical sets representing General American full vowels		
i		u	i:		u:	FLEECE		GOOSE
ɪ		ʊ	i		u	KIT		FOOT
e	ə	o	e:	ɜ:	o:	FACE	NURSE	GOAT
ɛ	ʌ	ɔ	e	ʌ	o	DRESS	STRUT	THOUGHT
æ		ɑ	a		a:	TRAP		LOT

If vowel transition is taken to be paramount, then the chart may look like one of these:

General American full vowels, vowel contour distinctive			General American full vowels, vowel contour distinctive		
ij		uw	ɪj		ʊu
i		u	ɪ		ʊ
ej	ər	ow	ɛj	əɹ	ɔɹ
e	ə	o	ɛ	ʌ	ɔ
æ		ɑ	æ		ɑ

or

(The transcriber at left assumes that there is no phonemic distinction between semivowels and approximants, so that /ej/ is equivalent to /ɛj/.)

Many linguists combine more than one of these features in their transcriptions, suggesting they consider the phonemic differences to be more complex than a single feature.

General American full vowels, height & length distinctive		
i:		u:
ɪ		ʊ
e:	ɜ:	o:
ɛ	ʌ	ɔ
æ		ɑ:

Stress

Stress is phonemic in English. For example, the words *desert* and *dessert* are distinguished by stress, as are the noun *a record* and the verb *to record*. Stressed syllables in English are louder than non-stressed syllables, as well as being longer and having a higher pitch. They also tend to have a fuller realization than unstressed syllables.

Examples of stress in English words, using boldface to represent stressed syllables, are *holiday*, *alone*, *admiration*, *confidential*, *degree*, and *weaker*. Ordinarily, grammatical words (auxiliary verbs, prepositions, pronouns, and the like) do not receive stress, whereas lexical words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, *etc.*) must have at least one stressed syllable.

English is a *stress-timed* language. That is, stressed syllables appear at a roughly steady tempo, and non-stressed syllables are shortened to accommodate this.

Traditional approaches describe English as having three degrees of stress: **Primary**, **secondary**, and **unstressed**. However, if stress is defined as relative respiratory force (that is, it involves greater pressure from the lungs than unstressed syllables), as most phoneticians argue, and is inherent in the word rather than the sentence (that is, it is lexical rather than prosodic), then these traditional approaches conflate two distinct processes: Stress on the one hand, and vowel reduction on the other. In this case, primary stress is actually prosodic stress, whereas secondary stress is simple stress in some positions, and an unstressed but not reduced vowel in others. Either way, there is a three-way phonemic distinction: Either three degrees of stress, or else **stressed**, **unstressed**, and **reduced**. The two approaches are sometimes conflated into a four-way 'stress' classification: *primary* (tonic stress), *secondary* (lexical stress), *tertiary* (unstressed full vowel), and *quaternary* (reduced vowel). See secondary stress for details.

Initial-stress-derived nouns mean that stress changes in many English words came about between noun and verb senses of a word. For example, a *rebel* [ˈɹɛb.əl] (stress on the first syllable) is inclined to *rebel* [ɹɪ.ˈbɛl] (stress on the second syllable) against the powers that be. The number of words using this pattern as opposed to only stressing the second syllable in all circumstances doubled every century or so, now including the English words *object*, *convict*, and *addict*.

Intonation

Prosodic stress is extra stress given to words when they appear in certain positions in an utterance, or when they receive special emphasis. It normally appears on the final stressed syllable in an intonation unit. So, for example, when the word *admiration* is said in isolation, or at the end of a sentence, the syllable *ra* is pronounced with greater force than the syllable *ad*. (This is traditionally transcribed as /,ædmɪˈreɪʃən/.) This is the origin of the primary stress-secondary stress distinction. However, the difference disappears when the word is not pronounced with this final intonation.

Prosodic stress can shift for various pragmatic functions, such as focus or contrast. For instance, consider the dialogue

"Is it brunch tomorrow?"

"No, it's *dinner* tomorrow."

In this case, the extra stress shifts from the last stressed syllable of the sentence, *tomorrow*, to the last stressed syllable of the emphasized word, *dinner*. Compare

"I'm going *tomorrow*." /aɪm ˈgoʊɪŋ tə ˈmɔroʊ/

with

"It's *dinner* tomorrow." /ɪts ˈdɪnə tə ˈmɔroʊ/

Although grammatical words generally do not have lexical stress, they do acquire prosodic stress when emphasized. Compare ordinary

"Come in!" /ˈkʌm ɪn/

with more emphatic

"Oh, *do* come in!" /oʊ ˈduː kʌm ˈɪn/

Phonotactics

Most languages of the world syllabify CVCV and CVCCV sequences as /CV.CV/ and /CVC.CV/ or /CV.CCV/, with consonants preferentially acting as the onset of a syllable containing the following vowel. According to one view, English is unusual in this regard, in that stressed syllables attract following consonants, so that 'CVCV and 'CVCCV syllabify as /'CVC.V/ and /'CVCC.V/, as long as the consonant cluster CC is a possible syllable coda.^[9] In addition, according to this view, /r/ preferentially syllabifies with the preceding vowel even when both syllables are unstressed, so that CVrV occurs as /CVr.V/.^[9] However, many scholars do not agree with this view.^[9]

Syllable structure

The syllable structure in English is (C)³V(C)⁵, with a near maximal example being *strengths* (/ˈstrɛŋkθs/, although it can be pronounced /ˈstrɛŋθs/).^[10] Because of an extensive pattern of articulatory overlap, English speakers rarely produce an audible release in consonant clusters.^[11] This can lead to cross-articulations that seem very much like deletions or complete assimilations. For example, *hundred pounds* may sound like [hʌndɹɛb pʰaʊndz] but X-ray^[12] and electropalatographic^{[13] [14]} studies demonstrate that inaudible and possibly weakened contacts may still be made so that the second /d/ in *hundred pounds* does not entirely assimilate a labial place of articulation, rather the labial co-occurs with the alveolar one.

When a stressed syllable contains a pure vowel (rather than a diphthong), followed by a single consonant and then another vowel, as in *holiday*, many native speakers feel that the consonant belongs to the preceding stressed syllable, /ˈhɒl.ɪ.deɪ/. However, when the stressed vowel is a long vowel or diphthong, as in *admiration* or *peko*, speakers agree that the consonant belongs to the following syllable: /ˈæd.mɪˈreɪ.ʃən/, /ˈpiː.koʊ/. Wells (1990)^[9] notes that consonants syllabify with the preceding rather than following vowel when the preceding vowel is the nucleus of a more salient syllable, with stressed syllables being the most salient, reduced syllables the least, and secondary stress / full unstressed vowels intermediate. But there are lexical differences as well, frequently with compound words but not exclusively. For example, in *dolphin* and *selfish*, he argues that the stressed syllable ends in /f/; in *shellfish*, the /f/ belongs with the following syllable: /ˈdɒlf.ɪn/, /ˈsɛlf.ɪʃ/ → [ˈdɒlfɪn], [ˈsɛlfɪʃ] vs /ˈʃɛl.fɪʃ/ → [ˈʃɛlˈfɪʃ], where the /f/ is a little longer and the /t/ not reduced. Similarly, in *toe-strap* the /t/ is a full plosive, as usual in syllable onset, whereas in *toast-rack* the /t/ is in many dialects reduced to the unreleased allophone it takes in syllable codas, or even elided: /ˈtoʊ.stræp/, /ˈtoʊst.ræk/ → [ˈtʰoʊst.ræp], [ˈtoʊs(̚)ɹæk]; likewise *nitrate* /ˈnaɪ.treɪt/ → [ˈnaɪt̚rɛɪt] with a voiceless /t/, vs *night-rate* /ˈnaɪt.rɛɪt/ → [ˈnaɪt̚rɛɪt] with a voiced /r/. Cues of syllable boundaries include aspiration of syllable onsets and (in the US) flapping of coda /t, d/ (*a tease* /əˈtiːz/ → [əˈtʰiːz] vs. *at ease* /ætˈiːz/ → [ætˈiːz]), epenthetic plosives like [t] in syllable codas (*fence* /ˈfɛns/ → [ˈfɛnts] but *inside* /ɪnˈsaɪd/ → [ɪnˈsaɪd]), and r-colored vowels when the /r/ is in the coda vs. labialization when it is in the onset (*key-ring* /ˈkiː.rɪŋ/ → [ˈkʰiːr̥wɪŋ] but *fearing* /ˈfiː.rɪŋ/ → [ˈfɪəwɪŋ]).

Onset

There is an on-going sound change (yod-dropping) by which /j/ as the final consonant in a cluster is being lost. In RP, words with /sj/ and /lj/ can usually be pronounced with or without this sound, e.g., [suːt] or [sjuːt]. For some speakers of English, including some British speakers, the sound change is more advanced and so, for example, in General American /j/ is also not present after /n/, /l/, /s/, /z/, /θ/, /t/ and /d/. In Welsh English it can occur in more combinations, for example in /tj/.

The following can occur as the onset:

All single consonant phonemes except /ŋ/	
Plosive plus approximant other than /j/: /pɫ/, /bɫ/, /kɫ/, /gɫ/, /pr/, /br/, /tr/, ^[1] /dr/, ^[1] /kr/, /gr/, /tw/, /dw/, /gw/, /kw/	play, blood, clean, glove, prize, bring, tree, ^[1] dream, ^[1] crowd, green, twin, dwarf, language, quick
Voiceless fricative plus approximant other than /j/: /fl/, /sl/, /fr/, /θr/, /ʃr/, /sw/, /θw/, /hw/	floor, sleep, friend, three, shrimp, swing, thwart, which
Consonant plus /j/: /pj/, /bj/, /tj/, /dj/, /kj/, /gj/, /mj/, /nj/, /tʃ/, /vʃ/, /θj/, /sj/, /zj/, /hʃ/, /lj/	pure, beautiful, tube, during, cute, argue, music, new, few, view, thew, suit, Zeus, huge, lurid
/s/ plus voiceless plosive: ^[3] /sp/, /st/, /sk/	speak, stop, skill
/s/ plus nasal: ^[3] /sm/, /sn/	smile, snow
/s/ plus voiceless plosive plus approximant: ^{[3][4]} /spl/, /skɫ/, /spr/, /str/, /skr/, /skw/, /smj/, /spj/, /stj/, /skj/	split, sclera, spring, street, scream, square, smew, spew, student, skewer

Notes:

1. In some American dialects, /tr/ and /dr/ tend to affricate, so that *tree* resembles "chree", and *dream* resembles "jream".^{[15] [16] [17]} This is sometimes transcribed as [tʃr] and [dʒr] respectively, but the pronunciation varies and may, for example, be closer to [tʃ] and [dʒ]^[18] or with a fricative release similar in quality to the rhotic, ie. [tʃ̥r̥], [dʒ̥r̥], or [tʃ̥r̥], [dʒ̥r̥].
2. In some dialects, /wr/ (rather than /r/) occurs in words beginning in wr- (*write*, *wrong*, *wren*, etc.).
3. Many clusters beginning with /ʃ/ and paralleling native clusters beginning with /s/ are found initially in German and Yiddish loanwords, such as /ʃl/, /ʃp/, /ʃt/, /ʃm/, /ʃn/, /ʃpr/, /ʃtr/ (in words such as *schlep*, *spiel*, *shtick*, *schmuck*, *schnapps*, *Shprintzen's*, *strudel*). /ʃw/ is found initially in the Hebrew loanword *schwa*. Before /r/ however, the native cluster is /ʃr/. The opposite cluster /sr/ is found in loanwords such as *Sri Lanka*, but this can be nativized by changing it to /ʃr/.
4. /skl/ occurs in the Greek loanword *sclerosis*; there is also /sf/ (*sphere*), /sfr/ (*sphragistics*), /sθ/ (*sthenics*), and /θl/ (*thlipsis*).

Other onsets

Certain English onsets appear only in contractions: e.g., /zbl/ ('*sblood*), /zd/ (*sdein*), and /zw/ or /dzw/ ('*swounds* or '*dswounds*). Some, such as /pʃ/ (*pshaw*) or /fw/ (*fwoosh*), can occur in interjections. An archaic voiceless fricative plus nasal exists, /fn/ (*fnese*).

A few other onsets occur in further (anglicized) loan words, including /bw/ (*bwana*), /mw/ (*moiré*), /nw/ (*noire*), /pw/ (*pueblo*), /zw/ (*zwieback*), /vw/ (*voilà*), /kv/ (*kvetch*), /ʃv/ (*schvartze*), /tv/ (*Tver*), /vl/ (*Vladimir*), and /zl/ (*zloty*).

Some clusters of this type can be converted to regular English phonotactics by simplifying the cluster: e.g. /l(d)z/ (*dziggetai*), /l(h)r/ (*Hrolf*), /kr(w)/ (*croissant*), /l(p)f/ (*pfennig*), /l(f)θ/ (*phthalic*), and /l(t)s/ (*tsunami*).

Others can be substituted by native clusters differing only in voice: /zb ~ sp/ (*sbirro*), and /zgr ~ skr/ (*sgraffito*).

Nucleus

The following can occur as the nucleus:

- All vowel sounds
- /m/, /n/ and /l/ in certain situations (see below under word-level rules)
- /r/ in rhotic varieties of English (eg General American) in certain situations (see below under word-level rules)

Coda

Most, and in theory all, of the following except those which end with /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /tʃ/ or /dʒ/ can be extended with /s/ or /z/ representing the morpheme -s/z-. Similarly most, and in theory all, of the following except those which end with /t/ or /d/ can be extended with /t/ or /d/ representing the morpheme -t/d-.

Wells (1990) argues that a variety of syllable codas are possible in English, even /ntr, ndr/ in words like *entry* /'ɛntr.ɪ/ and *sundry* /'sʌndr.ɪ/, with /tr, dr/ being treated as affricates along the lines of /tʃ, dʒ/. He argues that the traditional assumption that pre-vocalic consonants form a syllable with the following vowel is due to the influence of languages like French and Latin, where syllable structure is CVC.CVC regardless of stress placement. Disregarding such contentious cases, which do not occur at the ends of words, the following sequences can occur as the coda:

The single consonant phonemes except /h/, /w/, /j/ and, in non-rhotic varieties, /r/	
Lateral approximant + plosive or affricate: /lp/, /lb/, /lt/, /ld/, /ltʃ/, /ldʒ/, /lk/	help, bulb, belt, hold, belch, indulge, milk
In rhotic varieties, /r/ + plosive or affricate: /rp/, /rb/, /rt/, /rd/, /rtʃ/, /rdʒ/, /rk/, /rɹ/	harp, orb, fort, beard, arch, large, mark, morgue
Lateral approximant + fricative: /lf/, /lv/, /lθ/, /ls/, /lj/	golf, solve, wealth, else, Welsh
In rhotic varieties, /r/ + fricative: /rf/, /rv/, /rθ/, /rs/, /rʃ/	dwarf, carve, north, force, marsh
Lateral approximant + nasal: /lm/, /ln/	film, kiln
In rhotic varieties, /r/ + nasal or lateral: /rm/, /rn/, /rl/	arm, born, snarl
Nasal + homorganic plosive or affricate: /mp/, /nt/, /nd/, /ntʃ/, /ndʒ/, /ŋk/	jump, tent, end, lunch, lounge, pink
Nasal + fricative: /mf/, /mθ/ in non-rhotic varieties, /nθ/, /ns/, /nz/, /ŋθ/ in some varieties	triumph, warmth, month, prince, bronze, length
Voiceless fricative + voiceless plosive: /ft/, /sp/, /st/, /sk/	left, crisp, lost, ask
Two voiceless fricatives: /fθ/	fifth
Two voiceless plosives: /pt/, /kt/	opt, act
Plosive + voiceless fricative: /pθ/, /ps/, /tθ/, /ts/, /dθ/, /dz/, /ks/	depth, lapse, eighth, klutz, width, adze, box
Lateral approximant + two consonants: /lpt/, /lfθ/, /lts/, /lst/, /lkt/, /lks/	sculpt, twelfth, waltz, whilst, mulct, calx
In rhotic varieties, /r/ + two consonants: /rmθ/, /rpt/, /rps/, /rts/, /rst/, /rkt/	warmth, excerpt, corpse, quartz, horst, infarct
Nasal + homorganic plosive + plosive or fricative: /mpt/, /mps/, /ndθ/, /ŋkt/, /ŋks/, /ŋkθ/ in some varieties	prompt, glimpse, thousandth, distinct, jinx, length
Three obstruents: /ksθ/, /kst/	sixth, next

Note: For some speakers, a fricative before /θ/ is elided so that these never appear phonetically: /'ftfθ/ becomes ['ftθ], /'siksθ/ becomes ['sikθ], /'twelfθ/ becomes ['twelθ].

Syllable-level rules

- Both the onset and the coda are optional
- /j/ at the end of an onset cluster (/pj/, /bj/, /tj/, /dj/, /kj/, /fj/, /vj/, /θj/, /sj/, /zj/, /hj/, /mj/, /nj/, /lj/, /spj/, /stj/, /skj/) must be followed by /u:/ or /ʊə/
- Long vowels and diphthongs are not found before /ŋ/ except for the mimetic word *boing!*^[19]
- /ʊ/ is rare in syllable-initial position^[20]
- Stop + /w/ before /u:/, ʊ, ʌ, aʊ/ (all presently or historically /u(:)/) are excluded^[21]
- Sequences of /s/ + C₁ + V + C₁, where C₁ is a consonant other than /t/ and V is a short vowel, are virtually nonexistent^[21]

Word-level rules

- /ə/ does not occur in stressed syllables
- /ʒ/ does not occur in word-initial position in native English words although it can occur syllable-initial, e.g., *luxurious* /lʌɡ'ʒʊəriəs/
- /m/, /n/, /l/ and, in rhotic varieties, /r/ can be the syllable nucleus (ie a syllabic consonant) in an unstressed syllable following another consonant, especially /t/, /d/, /s/ or /z/
- Certain short vowel sounds, called checked vowels, cannot occur without a coda in a single syllable word. In RP, the following short vowel sounds are checked: /ɪ/, /ɛ/, /æ/, /ɒ/, /ʌ/, and /ʊ/.

History of English pronunciation

English consonants have been remarkably stable over time, and have undergone few changes in the last 1500 years. On the other hand, English vowels have been quite unstable. Not surprisingly, then, the main differences between modern dialects almost always involve vowels.

Around the late 14th century, English began to undergo the Great Vowel Shift, in which

- the high long vowels [i:] and [u:] in words like *price* and *mouth* became diphthongized, first to [əɪ] and [əʊ] (where they remain today in some environments in some accents such as Canadian English) and later to their modern values [aɪ] and [aʊ]. This is not unique to English, as this also happened in Dutch (first shift only) and German (both shifts).

The other long vowels became higher:

- [e:] became [i:] (for example *meet*),
- [a:] became [e:] (later diphthongized to [eɪ], for example *name*),
- [o:] became [u:] (for example *goose*), and
- [ɔ:] became [o:] (later diphthongized to [oʊ], for example *bone*).

Later developments complicate the picture: whereas in Geoffrey Chaucer's time *food*, *good*, and *blood* all had the vowel [o:] and in William Shakespeare's time they all had the vowel [u:], in modern pronunciation *good* has shortened its vowel to [ʊ] and *blood* has shortened and lowered its vowel to [ʌ] in most accents. In Shakespeare's day (late 16th-early 17th century),^[22] many rhymes were possible that no longer hold today.^[23] For example, in his play *The Taming of the Shrew*, *shrew* rhymed with *woe*.^[24]

æ-tensing

æ-tensing is a phenomenon found in many varieties of American English by which the vowel /æ/ has a longer, higher, and usually diphthongal pronunciation in some environments, usually to something like [eə]. Some American accents, for example that of New York City, Philadelphia, or Baltimore make a marginal phonemic distinction between /æ/ and /eə/ although the two occur largely in mutually exclusive environments.

Bad-lad split

The **bad-lad split** refers to the situation in some varieties of southern British English and Australian English, where a long phoneme /æː/ in words like *bad* contrasts with a short /æ/ in words like *lad*.

Cot-caught merger

The **cot-caught** merger is a sound change by which the vowel of words like *caught*, *talk*, and *tall* (/ɔ/), is pronounced the same as the vowel of words like *cot*, *rock*, and *doll* (/ɒ/ in New England /ɑː/ elsewhere). This merger is widespread in North American English, being found in approximately 40% of American speakers and virtually all Canadian speakers.

Father-bother merger

The **father-bother merger** is the pronunciation of the short O /ɒ/ in words such as "bother" identically to the broad A /ɑː/ of words such as "father", nearly universal in all of the United States and Canada save New England and the Maritime provinces; many American dictionaries use the same symbol for these vowels in pronunciation guides.

See also

- Australian English phonology
- English pronunciation of Greek letters
- English spelling
- General American
- Japanese speakers learning r and l
- Non-native pronunciations of English
- Phonological history of the English language
- Phonological history of English vowels
- Phonological history of English consonants
- Pronunciation of English th
- Received Pronunciation
- Regional accents of English
- Rhotic and non-rhotic accents
- Vocalic r
- Category:Splits and mergers in English phonology

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External links

- Sounds of English (includes animations and descriptions) (<http://calleteach.wordpress.com/2010/01/11/sounds-of-english/>)
 - Howjsay (<http://www.howjsay.com>) Enter a word to hear it spoken. About 100,000 words in British English with alternative pronunciations.
 - The sounds of English and the International Phonetic Alphabet (www.antimoon.com) (<http://www.antimoon.com/how/pronunc-soundsipa.htm>). Includes mp3 audio samples of all the English phonemes.
 - The Chaos by Gerard Nolst Trenité (<http://ncf.idallen.com/english.html>). A poem first published in an appendix to the 4th edition of the Dutchman's schoolbook "Drop Your Foreign Accent: engelsche uitspraakcoefeningen" (Haarlem: H D Tjeenk Willink & Zoon. The first version of the poem was entitled De Chaos, gave words with problematic spellings in italics, but had only 146 lines. Later versions contain about 800 of the worst irregularities in English spelling and pronunciation.
 - Chris Upwood on The Classic Concordance of Cacographic Chaos (<http://victorian.fortunecity.com/vangogh/555/Spell/chaos.html>)
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Grammar

English grammar

English grammar is the body of rules describing the properties of the English language. A language is such that its elements must be combined according to certain patterns. This article is concerned with (and restricted to) morphology, the building blocks of language; and syntax, the construction of meaningful phrases, clauses and sentences with the use of morphemes and words.

The grammar of any language is commonly approached in two different ways: *descriptive*, usually based on a systematic analysis of a large text corpus and describing grammatical structures thereupon; and *prescriptive*, which attempts to use the identified rules of a given language as a tool to govern the linguistic behaviour of speakers (see Descriptive linguistics and Linguistic prescription). Prescriptive grammar further concerns itself with several open disputes in English grammar, often representing changes in usage over time. This article predominantly concerns itself with descriptive grammar.

There are historical, social and regional variations of English. For example, British English and American English have several lexical differences; however, the grammatical differences are not equally conspicuous, and will be mentioned only when appropriate. Further, the many dialects of English have divergences from the grammar described here; they are only cursorily mentioned. This article describes a generalized present-day Standard English, the form of speech found in types of public discourse including broadcasting, education, entertainment, government, and news reporting. Standard English includes both formal and informal speech.

Word classes and phrase classes

Seven major word classes are described here. These are: noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and determiner. The first six are traditionally referred to as "parts of speech." There are minor word classes, such as interjections, but these do not fit into the clause and sentence structure of English.^[1]

Open and closed classes

Open word classes allow new members; closed word classes seldom do.^[1] Nouns such as "celebutante", (a celebrity who frequents the fashion circles) and "mentee," (a person advised by a mentor) and adverbs such as "24/7" ("I am working on it 24/7") are relatively new words; nouns and adverbs are therefore open classes.^[1] However, invented pronouns, such as the "Spivak pronouns", as a gender-neutral singular replacement for the "his or her" (as in: "The student should bring eir books.") have gained only niche acceptance during their existence; pronouns, in consequence, form a closed class.^[1]

Word classes and grammatical forms

A word can sometimes belong to several word classes. The class version of a word is called a "lexeme".^[1] For example, the word "run" is usually a verb, but it can also be a noun ("It is a ten mile run to Tipperary."); these are two different lexemes.^[1] Further, the same lexeme may be inflected to express different grammatical categories: for example, as a verb lexeme, "run" has several forms such as "runs," "ran," and "running."^[1] Words in one class can sometimes be derived from those in another and new words be created. The noun "aerobics," for example, has recently given rise to the adjective "aerobicized" ("the aerobicized bodies of Beverly Hills celebuitantes."^[1])

Phrase classes

Words combine to form phrases which themselves can take on the attributes of a word class. These classes are called phrase classes.^[1] The phrase: "The ancient pulse of germ and birth" functions as a noun in the sentence: "The ancient

pulse of germ and birth was shrunken hard and dry." (Thomas Hardy, *The Darkling Thrush*) It is therefore a *noun phrase*. Other phrase classes are: verb phrases, adjective phrases, adverb phrases, prepositional phrases, and determiner phrases.^[1]

Nouns and determiners

Nouns form the largest word class. According to Carter and McCarthy, they denote "classes and categories of things in the world, including people, animals, inanimate things, places, events, qualities and states."^[1] Consequently, the words "Mandela," "jaguar," "mansion," "volcano," "Timbuktoo," "blockade," "mercy," and "liquid" are all nouns. Nouns are not commonly identified by their form; however, some common suffixes such as "-age" ("shrinkage"), "-hood" ("sisterhood"), "-ism" ("journalism"), "-ist" ("lyricist"), "-ment" ("adornment"), "-ship" ("companionship"), "-tude" ("latitude"), and so forth, are usually identifiers of nouns.^[1] There are exceptions, of course: "assuage" and "disparage" are verbs; "augment" is a verb, "lament" and "worship" can be verbs. Nouns can also be created by conversion of verbs or adjectives. Examples include the nouns in: "a boring talk," "a five-week run," "the long caress," "the utter disdain," and so forth.

Number, gender, type, and syntactic features.

Nouns have singular and plural forms.^[1] Many plural forms have -s or -es endings (dog/dogs, referee/referees, bush/bushes), but by no means all (woman/women, axis/axes, medium/media). Unlike some other languages, in English, nouns do not have grammatical gender.^[1] However, many nouns can refer to masculine or feminine animate objects (mother/father, tiger/tigress, alumnus/alumna, male/female).^[1] Nouns can be classified semantically, i.e. by their meanings: common nouns ("sugar," "maple," "syrup," "wood"), proper nouns ("Cyrus," "China"), concrete nouns ("book," "laptop"), and abstract nouns ("heat," "prejudice").^[1] Alternatively, they can be distinguished grammatically: count nouns ("clock," "city," "colour") and non-count nouns ("milk," "decor," "foliage").^[1] Nouns have several syntactic features that can aid in their identification.^[1] Nouns (example: common noun "cat") may be

1. modified by adjectives ("the *beautiful* Angora cat"),
2. preceded by determiners ("the beautiful Angora cat"), or
3. pre-modified by other nouns ("the beautiful *Angora* cat").^[1]

Noun phrases

Noun phrases are phrases that function grammatically as nouns within sentences. In addition, nouns serve as "heads," or main words of noun phrases.^[1] Examples (the heads are in boldface):

1. "The burnt-out **ends** of smoky days."^[2]
2. "The real raw-knuckle **boys** who know what fighting means, ..."^[3]
3. "The idle **spear and shield** ..."^[4]

The head can have *modifiers*, a *complement*, or both. Modifiers can occur before the head ("The real raw-knuckle boys ...," or "The burnt-out ends ..." and they are then called *pre-modifiers*; or, they can occur after the head ("who know what fighting means ...") and are called *post-modifiers*.^[1] Example: "The rough, seamy-faced, raw-boned College **Servitor** ..."^[5] The pre-modifying phrase, for example, is composed of determiners ("The"), adjectives ("rough," "seamy-faced," ...) and other nouns ("College").

Complements occur after the head as well; however, they are essential for completing the meaning of the noun phrase in a way that post-modifiers are not.^[1] Examples (complements are italicized; heads are in boldface):

1. "The burnt-out **ends** *of smoky days*."^[6]
2. "The **suggestion** *that Mr. Touchett should invite me* appeared to have come from Miss Stackpole."^[7]
3. "The ancient **pulse** *of germ and birth* was shrunken hard and dry."^[8]

Within a sentence, a noun phrase can be a part of the grammatical subject, the object, or the complement. Examples (the noun phrase is italicized, and the head boldfaced):^[1]

1. grammatical subject: "*Some mute inglorious **Milton** here may rest.*"^[9]
2. object: "Dr. Pavlov ... delivered *many long propaganda **harangues** ...*"^[10])
3. complement: "'All they see is *some frumpy, wrinkled-up **person** passing by in a carriage waving at a crowd.*"^[11]

Verbs

Verbs form the second largest word class after nouns. According to Carter and McCarthy, verbs denote "actions, events, processes, and states."^[1] Consequently, "smile," "stab," "climb," "confront," "liquefy," "wake," "reflect" are all verbs. Some examples of verb endings, which while not dead giveaways, are often associated, include: "-ate" ("formulate"), "-iate" ("inebriate"), "-ify" ("electrify"), and "-ize" ("sermonize").^[1] There are exceptions, of course: "chocolate" is a noun, "immediate" is an adjective, "prize" can be a noun, and "maize" is a noun. Prefixes can also be used to create new verbs. Examples are: "un-" ("unmask"), "out-" ("outlast"), "over-" ("overtake"), and "under-" ("undervalue").^[1] Just as nouns can be formed from verbs by conversion, the reverse is also possible.^[1]

- "so are the sons of men **snared** in an evil time"^[12]
- "[a national convention] **nosed** parliament in the very seat of its authority"^[13]

Verbs can also be formed from adjectives:^[1]

- "To **dry** the old oak's sap, and cherish springs."^[14]
- "Time's glory is to **calm** contending kings"^[14]

Regular and irregular verbs

A verb is said to be *regular* if its base form does not change when inflections are added to create new forms.^[1] An example is: base form: climb; present form: climb; -s form: climbs; -ing form: climbing; past form: climbed; -ed participle: climbed.^[1] Irregular verbs are ones in which the base form changes; the endings corresponding to each form are not always unique.^[1] Examples:

- base form: catch; present form: catch; -s form: catches; -ing form: catching; past form: caught; -ed participle: caught.
- base form: choose; present form: choose; -s form: chooses; -ing form: choosing; past form: chose; -ed participle: chosen.

The verb "be" is the only verb in English which has distinct inflectional forms for each of the categories of grammatical forms: base form: be; present form: am, are; -s form: is; -ing form: being; past form: was, were; -ed participle: been.^[1]

Type and characteristics

Verbs come in three grammatical types: lexical, auxiliary, and modal.^[1] Lexical verbs form an open class which includes most verbs (state, action, processes, and events). For example, "dive," "soar," "swoon," "revive," "breathe," "choke," "lament," "celebrate," "consider," "ignore" are all lexical verbs.^[1] Auxiliary verbs form a closed class consisting of only three members: be, do, and have.^[1] Although auxiliary verbs are lexical verbs as well, their main function is to add information to other lexical verbs. This information indicates (a) aspect (progressive, perfect), (b) passive voice, and (c) clause type (interrogative, negative).^[1] In the following examples, the auxiliary is in boldface and the lexical verb is italicized.

1. aspect (progressive): "'She **is** *breathing* Granny; we've got to make her keep it up, that's all—just keep her breathing."^[15]
2. aspect (perfect): "'Yes, I want a coach,' said Maurice, and bade the coachman draw up to the stone where the poor man who **had** *swooned* was sitting."^[16]
3. passive voice: "When she was admitted into the house Beautiful, care **was** *taken* to inquire into the religious knowledge of her children."^[17]
4. clause type (interrogative): (Old joke) Boy: "Excuse me sir, How **do** I *get* to Carnegie Hall?" Man on street: "Practice, Practice, Practice."

5. clause type (negative): **Wasn't** she monstrously *surprised*?^[18]

Modal verbs also form a closed class which consists of the core modals ("can," "could," "shall," "should," "will," "would," "may," "might," "must"), semi-modals ("dare," "need," "ought to," "used to"), and modal expressions ("be able to," "have to").^[1] Modals add information to lexical verbs about degrees of certainty and necessity.^[1] Examples:

- less certain: "Before the snow **could** *melt* for good, an ice storm covered the lowcountry and we learned the deeper treachery of ice."^[19]
- more certain: "Eat your eggs in Lent and the snow **will** *melt*. That's what I say to our people when they get noisy over their cups at San Gallo ..."^[20]
- expressing necessity: "But I should think there must be some stream somewhere about. The snow **must** *melt*; besides, these great herds of deer must drink somewhere."^[21]

Modal verbs do not inflect for person, number or tense.^[1] Examples:

- person: "I/you/she **might** consider it."
- number: "I/We/She/They **might** consider it"
- tense: "They **might** have considered/be considering/have been considering it."

Verbs too have features that aid in their recognition:

1. they follow the (grammatical) subject noun phrase (in italics): "*The real raw-knuckle boys who know what fighting means* **enter** the arena without fanfare."
2. they agree with the subject noun phrase in number: "The real raw-knuckle *boy/boys* who knows/know what fighting means **enters/enter** the arena without fanfare."
3. they agree with the subject noun phrase in person: "I/He, the real raw-knuckle boy who knows what fighting means, **enter/enters** the arena without fanfare", and
4. with the exception of modal verbs, they can express tense: "The boys ... **had been entering** the arena without fanfare."

Verb phrases

Forms

Verb phrases are formed entirely of verbs. The verbs can be lexical, auxiliary, and modal. The head is the first verb in the verb phrase.^[1] Example:

- "I didn't notice Rowen around tonight," remarked Don, as they began to prepare for bed. "**Might have been sulking** in his tent," grinned Terry."^[22] Here, the verb phrase "might have been sulking" has the form "modal-auxiliary-auxiliary-lexical."

In a verb phrase, the modal comes first, then the auxiliary or several auxiliaries, and finally the lexical (main) verb.^[1] When a verb phrase has a combination of modal and auxiliaries, it is constituted usually in the following order: modal verb >> perfect *have* >> progressive *be* >> passive *be* >> Lexical verb.^[1] Examples:

- "He **might have been being used** by the CIA as part of their debriefing procedure, but he might just as easily have been part of the Russians' plans to use Oswald in America."^[23] Here, the verb phrase is: might (modal) have (perfect) been (progressive) being (passive) used (lexical).
- The modal expression "be able to" is an exception: "It is best to know that she **has** (perfect) **been** (progressive) **able to** (modal expression) **balance** (lexical verb) these qualities and quantities with a grace which has not fallen short of greatness ..."^[24]

Tense

Verb phrases can vary with tense, in which case they are called "tensed verb phrases."^[1] Example:

- "They **have accomplished** a lot this year, but they **had accomplished** even more last year."

There are many non-tensed forms as well:

1. base form of a lexical verb used as an imperative.^[1] Example: "**Halt!**"
2. base form of the lexical verb occurring as a subjunctive.^[1] Example: "'If he is a spy,' said Gorgik, 'I would rather he not **know** who I am.'"^[25]
3. the infinitive with "to."^[1] Examples:
 1. "Did you see her, chief—did you get a glimpse of her pleasant countenance, or come close enough to her ear, to sing in it the song she *loves to hear*?"^[26]
 2. "She got so she could tell big stories herself from listening to the rest. Because she loved to hear it, and the men *loved to hear* themselves, they would 'woof' and 'boogerboo' around the games to the limit."^[27]
4. the "-ing" form, shared between the gerund and present participle.^[1] Examples:
 1. "Biological diversity *is plummeting*, mainly due to habitat degradation and loss, pollution, overexploitation, competition from alien species, disease, and changing climates."^[28]
 2. "Then it was swooping downward, and in the next second, a huge metal magpie, with wings outstretched in full flight, *was plummeting* toward them."^[29]
5. the "-ed" participle.^[1] Examples:
 1. "I also know that the painter *has dined* twice with the Prince Regent."^[30]
 2. "Which in all probability means that you *had dined* together," replied Monte Cristo, laughing, "I am glad to see you are more sober than he was."^[31]

The time frame of a non-tensed verb phrase is determined by examining that of the main clause verb.^[1] Examples:

- "From the very beginning, Coltrane was an indefatigable worker at his saxophone spending hours upon hours **practicing** every day."^[32]
- "By assuming a good position and by **practicing** every day he will in time acquire a feeling and an appearance of ease before people."^[33]

In the first case, the time frame (past) of "practicing" is determined by "was" in the main clause; in the second, the time frame (present and future) of "practicing" is determined by "will in time," also in the main clause.

Aspect

Verb phrases can also express two aspects: *progressive* and *perfect*. Aspect provides additional information on the speaker's perception of time.

Progressive aspect

The progressive aspect consists of the auxiliary *be* form and the *-ing* form of the lexical verb.^[1] Examples:

- "Landlord, chambermaid, waiter rush to the door; but just as some distinguished guests **are arriving**, the curtains close, and the invisible theatrical manager cries out, 'Second syllable!'"^[34]
- "She made her curtsy, and **was departing** when the wretched young captain sprang up, looked at her, and sank back on the sofa with another wild laugh."^[35]

Properties:

- Progressive aspect may be found in verb phrases containing modals.^[1]
 - "Restless, exciting and witty, he cannot resist a fantastic theory ..., so that one **might be meeting** Syngé, Fielding, and Aldous Huxley, and on the same page."^[36]
- Non-tensed *-ing* forms, however, do not have the progressive aspect.^[1]

- "By **working** every day, he had learned the peculiarities, the weaknesses and strengths, of opposing batters ..."^[37] It cannot be changed to "By *being* working every day,"
- Progressive aspect can be combined with "to"-infinitive forms in a verb phrase.^[1]
 - "He loved to sit by the open window when the wind was east, and seemed **to be dreaming** of faraway scenes."^[38]

Perfect

The *perfect* aspect is created by the auxiliary "have" and the "-ed" participle form of the lexical verb.^[1] It refers to a time period that includes the present moment.^[1] Contrast "The flowers didn't bloom this summer" with "The flowers haven't bloomed this summer." The latter sentence suggests that the summer is not over yet.

Properties:

- The perfect can pair with modal verbs.^[1]
 - "You **might** (modal) **have invited** (perfect) the Mad Hatter to the tea-party."
- The perfect can be combined with the -ing and the to-infinitive forms.^[1]
 - "**Having turned** the TV **on**, he now mindlessly flicked through the channels."
 - "**To have run** the marathon, she would have needed to be in good shape."

Finally, the two aspects, progressive and perfect, can be combined in a verb phrase: "They've **been laughing** so hard that their sides hurt."

Voice

The *passive voice*, which provides information about the roles of different participants in an event, is formed with the auxiliary "be" and the "-ed" participle form of the lexical verb.^[1] Examples:

- (Sentence) "The older critics **slammed** the play with vituperation inexplicable unless one attributes it to homophobia."^[39]
- (passive voice) "Ever notice how she **was** (past of "be") **slammed** (-ed participle) by the critics until the actors started doing it themselves?"^[40]

Properties:

- Modal verbs can occur in passive voice.^[1]
 - "And if they couldn't get a handle on it soon, cities and towns all up and down the Eastern Seaboard **could** (modal) **be slammed** (passive) by the biggest storm of the year"^[41]
- Passive voice can be combined with non-tensed verbs such as "-ing" form and the "to-" infinitive.^[1]
 - "There he was—**getting slammed** by the critics—and still taking the high road."^[42]
 - "We were about **to be slammed** by an 80-foot breaking wave."^[43]
- Passive voice can combine with both the progressive and the perfect aspects.^[1]
 - (passive, progressive): "The wind had picked up. The boat **was being slammed** by the swells, and floundering."^[44]
 - (passive, perfect): "Although, alas, it's not such an exclusive club. I've sent them to everyone who **has been slammed** by that dreadful woman."^[45]

Mood

A verb phrase can also express mood, which refers to the "factual or non-factual status of events."^[1] There are three moods in English: indicative, imperative, and subjunctive.^[1]

Indicative mood

The indicative is the most common mood in English.^[1] It is a factual mood, and most constructions involving the various choices of person, tense, number, aspect, modality are in the indicative mood.^[1] Examples:

- "She will have a hangover tomorrow morning."
- "The Prime Minister and his cabinet were discussing the matter on that fateful day in 1939."

Imperative mood

The imperative mood is a non-factual mood and is employed for issuing directives.^[1]

- "**Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on**"^[46]
- "'Your father's urn is on the backseat. **Just leave the keys in the cup holder.**"^[47]

Subjunctive mood

The subjunctive mood is also a non-factual mood which refers to demands, desires, etc.^[1] It uses the base form of the verb *without inflections*.^[1] It is rare in English and is used after only a handful of words such as "demand," "request," "suggest," "ask," "plead," "pray," "insist," and so forth.^[1] Examples:

- "I demanded that Sheriff Jeanfreau **stay**. I even wanted worthless and annoying Ugly Henderson to stay."^[48]
- "'I suggest that you **not exercise** your temper overmuch,' Mayne said, and the French tinge in his voice sounded truly dangerous now."^[49]

Properties:

- Subjunctives can be used after conditional subordinators.^[1]
 - "I accepted on the condition that I **not be given** a starring role."^[50]
- Subjunctives can also be used after expressions of necessity.^[1]
 - "Two nuns are asked to paint a room in the convent, and the last instruction of Mother Superior is that they **not get** even a drop of paint on their habits."^[51]
- The subjunctive form of the verb "be" can occur as the base form "be".^[1]
 - "Whenever a prisoner alleges physical abuse, it is imperative that the prisoner **be seen** by an officer at the earliest possible opportunity."^[52]
- In its "were" form the subjunctive is used to express a hypothetical situation.^[1]
 - "'Lin said, turning toward Pei, 'I'm afraid she's excited at seeing me home again.' Pei smiled. 'I would be too, if I **were** she.'^[53]

Adjectives

According to Carter and McCarthy, "Adjectives describe properties, qualities, and states attributed to a noun or a pronoun."^[1] As was the case with nouns and verbs, the class of adjectives cannot be identified by the forms of its constituents.^[1] However, adjectives are commonly formed by adding the some suffixes to nouns.^[1] Examples: "-al" ("habitual," "multidimensional," "visceral"), "-ful" ("blissful," "pitiful," "woeful"), "-ic" ("atomic," "gigantic," "pedantic"), "-ish" ("impish," "peckish," "youngish"), "-ous" ("fabulous," "hazardous"). As with nouns and verbs, there are exceptions: "homosexual" can be a noun, "earful" is a noun, "anesthetic" can be a noun, "brandish" is a verb. Adjectives can also be formed from other adjectives through the addition of a suffix or more commonly a prefix:^[1] weakish, implacable, disloyal, irredeemable, unforeseen. A number of adjectives are formed by adding "a" as a prefix to a verb: "adrift," "astride," "awry."

Gradability

Adjectives come in two varieties: gradable and non-gradable.^[1] In a gradable adjective, the properties or qualities associated with it, exist along a scale.^[1] In the case of the adjective "hot," for example, we can speak of: not at all hot, ever so slightly hot, only just hot, quite hot, very hot, extremely hot, dangerously hot, and so forth. Consequently, "hot" is a gradable adjective. Gradable adjectives usually have antonyms: hot/cold, hard/soft, smart/dumb, light/heavy.^[1] Some adjectives do not have room for qualification or modification. These are the non-gradable adjectives, such as: pregnant, married, incarcerated, condemned, adolescent (as adjective), dead, and so forth.

In figurative or literary language, a non-gradable adjective can sometimes be treated as gradable, especially in order to emphasize some aspect:

- "When a man's verses cannot be understood, nor a man's good wit seconded with a forward child, understanding, it strikes a man **more dead** than a great reckoning in a little room."^[54]

A non-gradable adjective might have another connotation in which it is gradable. For example, "dead" when applied to sounds can mean dull, or not vibrant. In this meaning, it has been used as a gradable adjective:

- "... the bell seemed to sound **more dead** than it did when just before it sounded in open air."^[55]

Gradable adjectives can occur in comparative and superlative forms.^[1] For many common adjectives, these are formed by adding "-er" and "-est" to the base form:^[1] cold, colder, coldest; hot, hotter, hottest; dry, drier, driest, and so forth; however, for other adjectives, "more" and "most" are needed to provide the necessary qualification: more apparent, most apparent; more iconic, most iconic; more hazardous, most hazardous. Some gradable adjectives change forms atypically:^[1] good, better, best; bad, worse, worst; little, less, least; some/many, more, most.

Adjective phrases

Forms

An *adjective phrase* may consist of just one adjective, or a single adjective which has been modified or complemented.^[1]

Adjectives are usually modified by adverb phrases (adverb in boldface; adjective in italics):^[1]

- "... placing himself in a dignified and **truly imposing** attitude, began to draw from his mouth yard after yard of red tape ..."^[56]
- "Families did certainly come, beguiled by representations of **impossibly cheap** provisions, though the place was **in reality very expensive**, for every tradesman was a monopolist at heart."^[57]
- "... of anger frequent but **generally silent**, ..."^[58]

An adjective phrase can also consist of an adjective followed by a complement, usually a prepositional phrase, or by a "that" clause.^[1] Different adjectives require different patterns of complementation (adjective in italics; complement in bold face):^[1]

- "... during that brief time I was *proud* **of myself**, and I grew to love the heave and roll of the Ghost ..."^[59]
- "... her bosom *angry* **at his intrusion**, ..."^[60]
- "Dr. Drew is especially *keen* **on good congregational singing**."^[61]

Examples of "that" clause in the adjective phrase (adjective in italics; clause in boldface):

- "Was *sure* **that the shrill voice was that of a man**—a Frenchman."^[62]
- "The *longest* day **that ever was**; so she raves, restless and impatient."^[63]

An adjective phrase can combine pre-modification by an adverb phrase and post-modification by a complement,^[1] as in (adjective in italics; adverb phrase and complement in boldface):

- "Few people were **ever more proud of civic honours than the Thane of Fife**."^[64]

Attributive and predicative

An adjective phrase is attributive when it modifies a noun or a pronoun (adjective phrase in boldface; noun in italics).^[1]

- "**Truly selfish** genes do arise, in the sense that they reproduce themselves at a cost to the other genes in the genome."^[65]
- "Luisa Rosado: a *woman proud of being a midwife*"^[66]

An adjective phrase is predicative when it occurs in the predicate of a sentence (adjective phrase in boldface).^[1]

- "No, no, I didn't really think so," returned Dora; "but I am **a little tired**, and it made me **silly for a moment** ..."^[67]
- "She was ill at ease, and looked **more than usually stern and forbidding** as she entered the Hales' little drawing room."^[68]

Adverbs

Adverbs typically modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs. They perform a wide range of functions and are especially important for indicating "time, manner, place, degree, and frequency of an event, action, or process."^[1] Adjectives and adverbs are often derived from the same word, the majority being formed by adding the "-ly" ending to the corresponding adjective form.^[1] Recall the adjectives, "habitual", "pitiful", "impish", We can use them to form the adverbs:

- "habitually": "... shining out of the New England reserve with which Holgrave **habitually** masked whatever lay near his heart."^[69]
- "pitifully": "The lamb tottered along far behind, near exhaustion, bleating **pitifully**."^[70]
- "impishly": "Well," and he grinned **impishly**, "it was one doggone good party while it lasted!"^[71]

Some suffixes that are commonly found in adverbs are "-ward(s)" and "-wise":^[1]

- "homeward": "The ploughman **homeward** plods his weary way."^[72]
- "downward": "In tumbling turning, clustering loops, straight **downward** falling, ..."^[73]
- "lengthwise": "2 to 3 medium carrots, peeled, halved **lengthwise**, and cut into 1-inch pieces."^[74]

Some adverbs have the same form as the adjectives:^[1]

- "outside":
 - Adverb: "'You'd best begin, or you'll be sorry—it's raining **outside**."^[75]
 - Adjective: "It would be possible to winter the colonies in the barn if each colony is provided with a separate **outside** entrance; ..."^[76]
- "straight"
 - Adverb: "Five cigars, very dry, smoked **straight** except where wrapper loosened, as it did in two cases."^[77]
 - Adjective: "Numbering among the ranks of the "young and evil" in this text are ... **straight** women who fall in love with gay men, ..."^[78]

Some adverbs are not related to adjectives:^[1]

- "quite": "Mr. Bingley was obliged to be in town the following day, and ... Mrs. Bennet was **quite** disconcerted."^[79]
- "too": "... like a child that, having devoured its plumcake **too** hastily, sits sucking its fingers,"^[80]
- "so": "... oh! ... would she heave one little sigh to see a bright young life **so** rudely blighted, ...?"^[81]

Some adverbs inflect for comparative and superlative forms:^[1]

- "soon"
 - "O error, **soon** conceived, Thou never comest unto a happy birth, ..."^[82]
 - "Nerissa: 'superfluity comes **sooner** by white hairs, but competency lives longer."^[83]
 - "'Least said, **soonest** mended!"^[84]
- "well"

- "Valrosa **well** deserved its name, for in that climate of perpetual summer roses blossomed everywhere."^[85]
- "I'm afraid your appearance in the Psychological Quarterly was **better** deserved,' said Mrs. Arkwright, without removing her eyes from the microscope ..."^[86]
- "Who among the typical Victorians **best** deserved his hate?"^[87]

Adverb placement

Adverbs are most usually placed at the end of a phrase. Time adverbs (*yesterday, soon, habitually*) are the most flexible exception. "Connecting Adverbs", such as *next, then, however*, may also be placed at the beginning of a clause. Other exceptions include "focusing adverbs", which can occupy a middle position for emphasis. "^[88]

Adverb phrases

Forms

An adverb phrase is a phrase that collectively acts as an adverb within a sentence; in other words, it modifies a verb (or verb phrase), an adjective (or adjective phrase), or another adverb.^[1] The head of an adverb phrase (roman boldface), which is an adverb, may be modified by another adverb (*italics boldface*) or followed by a complement (*italics boldface*):^[1]

- "Yet ***all too suddenly*** Rosy popped back into the conversation,"^[89]
- "***Oddly enough***, that very shudder did the business."^[90]
- "The Stoics said, ***perhaps shockingly for us***, that a father ceases to be a father when his child dies."^[91]

An adverb phrase can be part of the complement of the verb "be." It then usually indicates location (adverb phrase in boldface; form of "be" in *italics*):^[1]

- "... it ***is underneath*** the pink slip that I wore on Wednesday with my Mechlin."^[92]
- "... ***north-by-northeast*** was Rich Mountain, ..."^[93]

Adverb phrases are frequently modifiers of verbs:^[1]

- "They plow through a heavy fog, and Enrique ***sleeps soundly—too soundly***."^[94]
- "***Sleepily, very sleepily***, you *stagger* to your feet and collapse into the nearest chair."^[95]

Adverb phrases are also frequently modifiers of adjectives and other adverbs (modifier in boldface; modified in *italics*):^[1]

- (adjectives) "Then to the swish of waters as the sailors sluice the decks all around and under you, you fall into a ***really deep*** sleep."^[96]
- (adverbs) "My grandma's kinda deaf and she sleeps like ***really heavily***."^[97]

Adverb phrases can also be modifiers of noun phrases (or pronoun phrases) and prepositional phrases (adverb phrases in boldface; modified phrases in *italics*):^[1]

- (noun phrase): "She stayed out in the middle of the wild sea, and told them that was ***quite the loveliest place***, you could see for many miles all round you,"^[98]
- (pronoun phrase): "... the typical structure of glioma is that of spherical and cylindrical lobules, ***almost each and everyone of which*** has a centrally located blood vessel."^[99]
- (prepositional phrase): "***About halfway through the movie***, I decided to ..."^[100]

Adverb phrases also modify determiners (modifier in boldface; modified in *italics*):^[1]

- "The devil knows best what he said, but at least she became his tool and was in the habit of seeing him ***nearly every*** evening."^[101]
- "***Nearly if not quite all*** civilized peoples and ourselves ***above almost all*** others, are heavily burdened with the interest upon their public debt."^[102]

Functions

According to Carter and McCarthy, "As well as giving information on the time, place, manner and degree of an action, event, or process, adverb phrases can also have a commenting function, indicating the attitude and point of view of the speaker or writer towards a whole sentence or utterance."^[1] Examples:

- "**Frankly**, my dear, I don't give a damn."^[103]
- "**Astonishingly**, she'd shelled every nut, leaving me only the inner skin to remove."^[104]

Adverb phrases also indicate the relation between two clauses in a sentence.^[1] Such adverbs are usually called "linking adverbs." Example:

- "... they concluded from the similarities of their bodies, that mine must contain at least 1724 of theirs, and **consequently** would require as much food as was necessary to support that number of Lilliputians."^[105]

Prepositions

Prepositions relate two events in time or two people or things in space.^[1] They form a closed class.^[1] They also represent abstract relations between two entities:^[1] Examples:

1. ("after:"): "We came home from Mr. Boythorn's **after** six pleasant weeks."^[106]
2. ("after:"): "The body of a little wizened Gond lay with its feet in the ashes, and Bagheera looked inquiringly at Mowgli. "That was done with a bamboo," said the boy, **after** one glance."^[107]
3. ("to:"): "I must go down **to** the seas again, **to** the vagrant gypsy life, ..."^[108]
4. ("between" and "through:"): "**Between** two golden tufts of summer grass, I see the world **through** hot air **as through** glass, ..."^[109]
5. ("during:"): "**During** these years at Florence, Leonardo's history is the history of his art; he himself is lost in the bright cloud of it."^[110]
6. ("of:"): "When to the sessions **of** sweet silent thought I summon up remembrances of things past."^[111]

Prepositions are accompanied by prepositional complements;^[112] these are usually noun phrases.^[112] In the above examples, the prepositional complements are:

1. preposition: "after"; prepositional complement: "six pleasant weeks"
2. preposition: "after"; prepositional complement: "one glance"
3. preposition: "to"; prepositional complement: "the seas"; preposition: "to"; prepositional complement: "the vagrant gypsy life";
4. preposition: "Between"; prepositional complement: "two golden tufts of summer grass,"; preposition: "through"; prepositional complement: "hot air"; preposition: "as through"; prepositional complement: "glass."
5. preposition: "during"; prepositional complement: "these years at Florence."
6. preposition: "of"; prepositional complement: "sweet silent thought"; preposition: "of"; prepositional complement: "things past."

Prepositional phrases

A prepositional phrase is formed when a preposition combines with its complement.^[1] In the above examples, the prepositional phrases are:

1. prepositional phrase: "after six pleasant weeks"
2. prepositional phrase: "after one glance"
3. prepositional phrases: "to the seas" and "to the vagrant gypsy life"
4. prepositional phrases: "Between two golden tufts of summer grass," "through hot air" and "as through glass."
5. prepositional phrase: "During these years at Florence."
6. prepositional phrases "of sweet silent thought" and "of things past."

Conjunctions

According to Carter and McCarthy, "Conjunctions express a variety of logical relations between phrases, clauses and sentences."^[112] There are two kinds of conjunctions: coordinating conjunctions and subordinating conjunctions.^[1]

Coordinating

Coordinating conjunctions link "elements of equal grammatical status."^[1] The elements in questions may vary from a prefix to an entire sentence.^[1] Examples:

- (prefixes): "The doctor must provide facilities for *pre-* **and** *post* test counselling and have his own strict procedures for the storing of that confidential information."^[113]
- (words): "No, I'll never love *anybody* **but** *you*, Tom, and I'll never marry anybody but you--and you ain't to ever marry *anybody* **but** *me*, either."^[114]
- (phrases): "Can *storied urn* **or** *animated* bust back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?"^[115]
- (subordinate clauses): "*Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life*, **or** *whether that station will be held by anybody else*, these pages must show."^[116]
- (independent clauses): "Well, *I think you're here, plain enough*, **but** *I think you're a tangle-headed old fool*, Jim."^[117]
- (sentences): "He said we were neither of us much to look at and we were as sour as we looked. **But** I don't feel as sour as I used to before I knew robin and Dickon."^[118]

A *correlative conjunction* is a pair of constituent elements, each of which is associated with the grammatical unit to be coordinated.^[1] The common correlatives in English are:

- "either ... or":
 - "The clergyman stayed to exchange a few sentences, **either** *of admonition* **or** *reproof*, with his haughty parishioner"^[119]
 - "...; for I could not divest myself of a misgiving that something might happen to London in the meanwhile, and that, when I got there, it would be **either** *greatly deteriorated* **or** *clean gone*."^[120]
- "neither ... nor":
 - "Buck made no effort. He lay quietly where he had fallen. The lash bit into him again and again, but he **neither** *whined* **nor** *struggled*."^[121]
 - "For I have **neither** *wit*, **nor** *words*, **nor** *worth*, *action*, **nor** *utterance*, **nor** *the power of speech*, to stir men's blood: I only speak right on; ..." ^[122]
- "both ... and"
 - "There was no mistaking her sincerity—it breathed in every tone of her voice. **Both** *Marilla* **and** *Mrs. Lynde* recognized its unmistakable ring."^[123]
 - "There messages have **both** *ethical* **and** *pragmatic* overtones, urging women to recognize that even if they do suffer from physical and social disadvantages, their lives are far from being determined by their biology."^[124]
- "Not only ... but also"
 - "The director of *A Doll's House*, the brilliant Zhang Min, ..., was impressed with Lin **not only** *professionally* **but also** *personally*."^[125]
 - "... she attempted to persuade her husband to give up his affair. **Not only** *did he refuse*, **but** *he also* *told her he loved them both*"^[126]

Subordinating conjunctions

Subordinating conjunction relate only clauses to one another. They make the clause associated with them into a subordinate clause.^[1] Some common subordinating conjunctions in English are: (of time) after, before, since, until, when, while; (cause and effect): because, since, now that, as, in order that, so; (opposition): although, though, even though, whereas, while; (condition): if, unless, only if, whether or not, whether or no, even if, in case (that), and so forth.^[1] Examples:

- (time: "before"): "Perhaps Homo erectus had already died out **before** *Homo sapiens* arrived."^[127]
- (cause and effect: "in order that"): "**In order that** *feelings, representations, ideas and the like should attain a certain degree of memorability*, it is important that they should not remain isolated ..."^[128]
- (opposition: "although"): "Ultimately there were seven more sessions, in which, **although** *she remained talkative*, she increasingly clearly conveyed a sense that she did not wish to come any more."^[129]
- (condition: "even if"): "**Even if** *Sethe could deal with the return of the spirit*, Stamp didn't believe her daughter could."^[130]

Sentence and clause patterns

Identified in English by a capitalized initial letter in its first word and by a period (or full stop) at the end of its last word, the sentence is the largest constituent of grammar.^[1] A text that contains more than one sentence is no longer in the realm of grammar, but rather of discourse, as are all conversations, howsoever brief.^[1] Sentences themselves consist of clauses which are the principal constituents of grammar. A clause consists of a subject, which is usually a noun phrase, and a predicate which is usually a verb phrase with an accompanying grammatical unit in the form of an object or complement.^[1]

History of English grammar writing

The first **English grammar**, Pamphlet for Grammar by William Bullokar, written with the ostensible goal of demonstrating that English was just as rule-bound as Latin, was published in 1586. Bullokar's grammar was faithfully modeled on William Lily's Latin grammar, *Rudimenta Grammatices* (1534), which was being used in schools in England at that time, having been "prescribed" for them in 1542 by Henry VIII. Although Bullokar wrote his grammar in English and used a "reformed spelling system" of his own invention, many English grammars, for much of the century after Bullokar's effort, were written in Latin, especially by authors who were aiming to be scholarly. John Wallis's *Grammatica Linguae Anglicanae* (1685) was the last English grammar written in Latin.

Even as late as the early 19th century, Lindley Murray, the author of one of the most widely used grammars of the day, was having to cite "grammatical authorities" to bolster the claim that grammatical cases in English are different from those in Ancient Greek or Latin.

See also

- Apokoinu construction
- Capitalization
- Conditional sentence
- Disputes in English grammar
- *Do*-support
- English noun phrase
- English prefixes
- English verbs
- Grammar checker
- *Grammar Ray: A Graphic Guide to Grammar* (series of six books)
- Nominal group
- Thematic equative
- French grammar
- Spanish grammar
- German grammar

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External links

- English Grammar, wikibook in English
 - A Friendly Grammar of English (<http://www.beaugrande.com/UPLOADGRAMMARHEADER.htm>) by Robert de Beaugrande
 - Modern English Grammar (<http://papyr.com/hypertextbooks/grammar/>) by Daniel Kies
 - Grammar lessons, rules, and news for everyday use (<http://www.englishgrammar.org/>) by Jennifer Frost
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 - Adjectives, Compounds and Words (<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/staff/laurie-bauer/Bauer-adj-compound.pdf>) (Laurie Bauer)
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Writing system

English alphabet

The modern **English alphabet** is a Latin-based alphabet consisting of 26 letters^[1] – the same letters that are found in the Basic modern Latin alphabet:

Majuscule Forms (also called uppercase or capital letters)																									
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
Minuscule Forms (also called lowercase or small letters)																									
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z

The exact shape of printed letters varies depending on the typeface. The shape of handwritten letters can differ significantly from the standard printed form (and between individuals), especially when written in cursive style. See the individual letter articles for information about letter shapes and origins (follow the links on any of the uppercase letters above).

Written English also uses a number of digraphs, but they are not considered to be part of the alphabet.

History

Old English

The English language was first written in the Anglo-Saxon futhorc runic alphabet, in use from the 5th century. This alphabet was brought to what is now England, along with the proto-form of the language itself, by Anglo-Saxon settlers. Very few examples of this form of written Old English have survived, these being mostly short inscriptions or fragments.

The Latin alphabet, introduced by Christian missionaries, began to replace the Anglo-Saxon futhorc from about the 7th century, although the two continued in parallel for some time. Futhorc influenced the Latin alphabet by providing it with the letters *thorn* (Þ þ) and *wynn* (ƿ ƿ). The letter *eth* (Ð ð) was later devised as a modification of *dee* (D d), and finally *yogh* (ȝ ȝ) was created by Norman scribes from the insular *gee* in Old English and Irish, and used alongside their Carolingian "gee".

The a-e ligature *ash* (Æ æ) was adopted as a letter its own right, named after a futhorc rune *æsc*. In very early Old English the o-e ligature *ethel* (ƒ ƒ) also appeared as a distinct letter, likewise named after a rune, *æðel*. Additionally, the v-v or u-u ligature *double-u* (W w) was in use.

In the year 1011, a writer named Byrhtferð ordered the Old English alphabet for numerological purposes.^[2] He listed the 24 letters of the Latin alphabet (including ampersand) first, then 5 additional English letters, starting with the Tironian note *ond* (ↀ) an insular symbol for *and*:

A B C D E F G H I K L M N O P Q R S T V X Y Z & ↀ ƿ Þ ð Æ

Modern English

In the orthography of Modern English, thorn (þ), eth (ð), wynn (ƿ), yogh (ȝ), ash (æ), and ethel (ǣ) are obsolete. Latin borrowings reintroduced homographs of ash and ethel into Middle and Early Modern English, though they are not considered to be the same letters but rather ligatures, and in any case are somewhat old-fashioned. Thorn and eth were both replaced by *th*, though thorn continued in existence for some time, its lowercase form gradually becoming graphically indistinguishable from the minuscule *y* in most handwriting. *Y* for *th* can still be seen in pseudo-archaisms such as “Ye Olde Booke Shoppe”. The letters þ and ð are still used in present-day Icelandic. Wynn disappeared from English around the fourteenth century when it was supplanted by *uu*, which ultimately developed into the modern *w*. Yogh disappeared around the fifteenth century and was typically replaced by *gh*.

The letters *u* and *j*, as distinct from *v* and *i*, were introduced in the 16th century, and *w* assumed the status of an independent letter, so that the English alphabet is now considered to consist of the following 26 letters:

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

The variant lowercase form long s (ſ) lasted into early modern English, and was used in non-final position up to the early 19th century.

The ligatures *æ* and *œ* are still used in formal writing for certain words of Greek or Latin origin, such as *encyclopædia* and *cælom*. Lack of awareness and technological limitations (such as their absence from the standard qwerty keyboard) have made it common to see these rendered as “ae” and “oe”, respectively, in modern, non-academic usage. These ligatures are not used in American English, where a lone *e* has mostly supplanted both (for example, *encyclopedia* for *encyclopædia*, and *fetus* for *fætus*).

Diacritics

Diacritic marks mainly appear in loanwords such as *naïve* and *façade*. As such words become naturalised there is a tendency to drop the diacritics, as is now often the case with the two mentioned; but, automatic spell-check, as in Microsoft Office, also oftentimes adds the diacritics back in, which has slowed their disappearance in recent years. Words that are still perceived as foreign tend to retain them; for example, the only spelling of *soupçon* found in English dictionaries (the OED and others) uses the diacritic. Diacritics are also more likely to be retained where there would otherwise be confusion with another word (for example, *résumé* rather than *resume*), and, rarely, even added (as in *maté*, from Spanish *yerba mate*, but following the pattern of *café*, from French).

Occasionally, especially in older writing, diacritics are used to indicate the syllables of a word: *cursed* (verb) is pronounced with one syllable, while *cursèd* (adjective) is pronounced with two. Similarly, while in *chicken coop* the letters *-oo-* represent a single vowel sound (a digraph), in *zoölogist* and *coöperation*, they represent two. An acute, grave or diaeresis may also be placed over an ‘e’ at the end of a word to indicate that it is not silent, and to show how it should be pronounced instead. These devices, are, however, optional, and are in practice now rarely used even where they would serve to alleviate some degree of confusion.

Ampersand

The ampersand (&) has sometimes appeared at the end of the English alphabet, as in Byrhtferð's list of letters in 1011.^[2] Properly speaking the figure is a ligature for the letters *Et*. In English it is used to represent the word *and* and occasionally the Latin word *et*, as in the abbreviation *&c* (et cetera).

Apostrophe

The apostrophe, while not considered part of the English alphabet, is used to abbreviate English words. A few pairs of words, such as *its* (belonging to *it*) and *it's* (*it is* or *it has*), *were* (plural of *was*) and *we're* (we are), and *shed* (to get rid of) and *she'd* (*she would* or *she had*) are distinguished in writing only by the presence or absence of an

apostrophe. The apostrophe also distinguishes the possessive endings *-s* and *-s'* from the common plural ending *-s*, a practice introduced in the 18th century; before, all three endings were written *-s*, which could lead to confusion (as in, *the Apostles words*).

Letter names

The names of the letters are rarely spelled out, except when used in derivations or compound words (for example *tee-shirt*, *deejay*, *emcee*, *okay*, *aitchless*, *wye-level*, etc.), derived forms (for example *exed out*, *effing*, *to eff and blind*, etc.), and in the names of objects named after letters (for example *em (space)* in printing and *wye (junction)* in railroading). The forms listed below are from the Oxford English Dictionary. Vowels stand for themselves, and consonants usually have the form *consonant + ee* or *e + consonant* (e.g. *bee* and *ef*). The exceptions are the letters *aitch*, *jay*, *kay*, *cue*, *ar*, *ess* (but *es-* in compounds), *wye*, and *zed*. Plurals of consonants end in *-s* (*bees*, *efs*, *ems*) or, in the cases of *aitch*, *ess*, and *ex*, in *-es* (*aitches*, *esses*, *exes*). Plurals of vowels end in *-es* (*aes*, *ees*, *ies*, *oes*, *ues*); these are rare. Of course, all letters may stand for themselves, generally in capitalized form (*okay* or *OK*, *emcee* or *MC*), and plurals may be based on these (*aes* or *As*, *cees* or *Cs*, etc.)

Letter	Letter name	Pronunciation
A	<i>a</i>	/eɪ ^[3] /
B	<i>bee</i>	/bi:/
C	<i>cee</i>	/si:/
D	<i>dee</i>	/di:/
E	<i>e</i>	/i:/
F	<i>ef (eff as a verb)</i>	/ɛf/
G	<i>gee</i>	/dʒi:/
H	<i>aitch</i>	/eɪtʃ/
	<i>haitch</i> ^[4]	/hɛɪtʃ/
I	<i>i</i>	/aɪ/
J	<i>jay</i>	/dʒeɪ/
	<i>jiy</i> ^[5]	/dʒaɪ/
K	<i>kay</i>	/keɪ/
L	<i>el</i>	/ɛl/
M	<i>em</i>	/ɛm/
N	<i>en</i>	/ɛn/
O	<i>o</i>	/oʊ/
P	<i>pee</i>	/pi:/
Q	<i>cue</i>	/kju:/
R	<i>ar</i>	/ɑr ^[6] /
S	<i>ess (es-)</i> ^[7]	/ɛs/
T	<i>tee</i>	/ti:/
U	<i>u</i>	/ju:/
V	<i>vee</i>	/vi:/

W	<i>double-u</i>	/ˈdʌbəljuː/ in careful speech ^[8]
X	<i>ex</i>	/ɛks/
Y	<i>wy</i> or <i>wye</i>	/waɪ/
Z	<i>zed</i> ^[9]	/zɛd/
	<i>zee</i> ^[10]	/ziː/
	<i>izzard</i> ^[11]	/ˈɪzərd/

Some groups of letters, such as *pee* and *bee*, or *em* and *en*, are easily confused in speech, especially when heard over the telephone or a radio communications link. Spelling alphabets such as the ICAO spelling alphabet, used by aircraft pilots, police and others, are designed to eliminate this potential confusion by giving each letter a name that sounds quite different from any other.

Phonology

The letters A, E, I, O, U are considered vowel letters, since (except when silent) they represent vowels; the remaining letters are considered consonant letters, since when not silent they generally represent consonants. However, Y commonly represents vowels as well as a consonant, as very rarely does W. (See Words without vowels.)

Letter frequencies

The letter most frequently used in English is E. The least frequently used letter is Z.

The list below shows the frequency of letter use in English.^[12]

Letter	Frequency
A	8.17%
B	1.49%
C	2.78%
D	4.25%
E	12.70%
F	2.23%
G	2.02%
H	6.09%
I	6.97%
J	0.15%
K	0.77%
L	4.03%
M	2.41%
N	6.75%
O	7.51%
P	1.93%
Q	0.10%
R	5.99%

S	6.33%
T	9.06%
U	2.76%
V	0.98%
W	2.36%
X	0.15%
Y	1.97%
Z	0.07%

See also

- Alphabet
- ASCII
- Anglo-Saxon futhorc
- English language
- English spelling reform
- History of the English language
- Latin-derived alphabet
- Greek alphabet

Footnotes

- [1] See also the section on Ligatures
- [2] Michael Everson, Everttype, Baldur Sigurðsson, Íslensk Málstöð, *On the Status of the Latin Letter Þorn and of its Sorting Order* (<http://www.everttype.com/standards/wynnyogh/thorn.html>)
- [3] Sometimes /æ/ in Hiberno-English
- [4] sometimes in Australian and Irish English, and usually in Indian English (although often considered incorrect, particularly in Britain)
- [5] in Scottish English
- [6] /ɔr/ (/ɔər/?) in Hiberno-English
- [7] in compounds such *es-hook*
- [8] Especially in American English, the el is not often pronounced in informal speech. (*Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed). Common colloquial pronunciations are /ˈdʌbəjuː/, /ˈdʌbəjəl/, and /ˈdʌbjəl/, especially in terms like *www*.
- [9] in British and Commonwealth English
- [10] in American English
- [11] in Scottish English
- [12] Lewand, Robert (2000). *Cryptological Mathematics* (<http://books.google.com/books?id=CyCcRAm7eQMC&pg=PA36>). The Mathematical Association of America. p. 36. ISBN 978-0883857199. . Table also available from (<http://pages.central.edu/emp/LintonT/classes/spring01/cryptography/letterfreq.html>)

English orthography

English orthography is the alphabetic spelling system used by the English language. English orthography, like other alphabetic orthographies, uses a set of habits to represent speech sounds in writing. In most other languages, these habits are regular enough so that they may be called *rules*. In standard English spelling, however, nearly every sound is spelled in more than one way, and most spellings and all letters can be pronounced in more than one way and often in many different ways. This is partly due to the complex history of the English language,^[1] but mainly due to the fact that no systematic spelling reform has been implemented in English, contrary to the situation in most other languages.

English spelling is mainly based on how the language was pronounced in the 15th century. Especially the pronunciation of long vowels and diphthongs has completely changed since then.^[2]

Function of the letters

Note: In the following discussion, only one or two common pronunciations of American and British English varieties are used in this article for each word cited. Other regional pronunciations may be possible for some words, but indicating all possible regional variants in the article is impractical.

Phonemic representation

Like most alphabetic systems, letters in English orthography may represent a particular sound. For example, the word *cat* (pronounced /ˈkæt/) consists of three letters ⟨c⟩, ⟨a⟩, and ⟨t⟩, in which ⟨c⟩ represents the sound /k/, ⟨a⟩ the sound /æ/, and ⟨t⟩ the sound /t/.

Single letters or multiple sequences of letters may provide this function. Thus, the single letter ⟨c⟩ in the word *cat* represents the single sound /k/. In the word *ship* (pronounced /ˈʃɪp/), the digraph ⟨sh⟩ (two letters) represents the sound /ʃ/. In the word *ditch*, the three letters ⟨tch⟩ represent the sound /tʃ/.

Less commonly, a single letter can represent multiple sounds voiced in succession. The most common example is the letter ⟨x⟩ which normally represents the consonant cluster /ks/ (for example, in the word *ex-wife*, pronounced /ˌɛksˈwaɪf/).

The same letter (or sequence of letters) may indicate different sounds when it occurs in different positions within a word. For instance, the digraph ⟨gh⟩ represents the sound /f/ at the end of some words, such as *rough* /ˈrʌf/. At the beginning of syllables (i.e. the syllable onset), the digraph ⟨gh⟩ represents the sound /g/, such as in the word *ghost* (pronounced /ˈɡoʊst/). Conversely, the digraph ⟨gh⟩ never represents the sound /f/ in syllable onsets and almost never represents the sound /g/ in syllable codas (*Pittsburgh* is an exception). (Incidentally, this shows that *ghoti* does not follow English spelling rules to sound like *fish*.)

Word origin

Another type of spelling characteristic is related to word origin. For example, when representing a vowel, the letter ⟨y⟩ in non-word-final positions, represents the sound English pronunciation: /ɪ/ in some words borrowed from Greek (reflecting an original upsilon), whereas the letter usually representing this sound in non-Greek words is the letter ⟨i⟩. Thus, the word *myth* (pronounced /ˈmɪθ/) is of Greek origin, while *pith* (pronounced /ˈpɪθ/) is a Germanic word. Other examples include ⟨th⟩ representing /t/ (which is usually represented by ⟨t⟩), ⟨ph⟩ representing /f/ (which is usually represented by ⟨f⟩), and ⟨ch⟩ representing /k/ (which is usually represented by ⟨c⟩ or ⟨k⟩) — the use of these spellings for these sounds often mark words that have been borrowed from Greek.

Some researchers such as Brengelman (1970), have suggested that, in addition to this marking of word origin, these spellings indicate a more formal level of style or register in a given text, although Rollins (2004) finds this point to be exaggerated as there would be many exceptions where a word with one of these spellings, such as ⟨ph⟩ for /f/ (like

telephone), could occur in an informal text.

Generally, the ability to trace meaning through orthography is far more important than the sound, as English, like many other languages, has many homophones.

Homophone differentiation

Spelling may also be used to distinguish between homophones (words with the same pronunciation but different meanings). For example, the words *hour* and *our* are pronounced identically in some dialects (as /'aʊ(ə)r/). However, they are distinguished from each other orthographically by the addition of the letter ⟨h⟩. Another example is the pair of homophones *plain* and *plane*, where both are pronounced /'pleɪn/ but are marked with two different orthographic representations of the vowel /eɪ/.^[3]

In written language, this may help to resolve potential ambiguities that would arise otherwise (cf. *He's breaking the car* vs. *He's braking the car*). This is particularly advantageous in writing since, unlike in the spoken language, the reader often has no recourse to ask for clarification. Nevertheless, homophones that are unresolved by spelling still exist (for example, the word *bay* has at least five fundamentally different meanings).

Some proponents of spelling reform view homophones as undesirable and would prefer that they be eliminated. Doing so, however, would increase orthographic ambiguities that would need to be resolved via the linguistic context.

Marking sound changes in other letters

Another function of English letters is to provide information about other aspects of pronunciation or the word itself. Rollins (2004) uses the term "markers" for letters with this function. Letters may mark different types of information. One type of marking is that of a different pronunciation of another letter within the word. An example of this is letter ⟨e⟩ in the word *cottage* (pronounced English pronunciation: /'kɒtɪdʒ/). Here ⟨e⟩ indicates that the preceding ⟨g⟩ should represent the sound /dʒ/. This contrasts with the more common value of ⟨g⟩ in word-final position as the sound /g/, such as in *tag* (pronounced /'tæg/).

A particular letter may have more than one pronunciation-marking role. Besides the marking of word-final ⟨g⟩ as indicating /dʒ/ as in *cottage*, the letter ⟨e⟩ may also mark an altered pronunciation for other vowels. In the pair *ban* and *bane*, the ⟨a⟩ of *ban* has the value /æ/, whereas the ⟨a⟩ of *bane* is marked by the ⟨e⟩ as having the value /eɪ/.

A single letter may even fill multiple pronunciation-marking roles simultaneously. For example, in the word *wage* the ⟨e⟩ marks not only the change of the ⟨a⟩ from /æ/ to /eɪ/, but also of the ⟨g⟩ from /g/ to /dʒ/.

Functionless letters

Some letters have no linguistic function. In Old and Middle English [v] was an allophone of /f/ occurring between vowels. The deletion of historical final schwas at the end of words such as *give* and *have* phonemicized /v/, but the now-silent ⟨e⟩ remained at the end of most /v/-final words. Words spelled with final ⟨v⟩ such as *rev* and *Slav* remain comparatively rare.

Multiple functionality

A given letter or (letters) may have dual functions. For example, the letter ⟨i⟩ in the word *cinema* has a sound-representing function (representing the sound /ɪ/) and a pronunciation-marking function (marking the ⟨c⟩ as having the value /s/ opposed to the value /k/).

Underlying representation

Like many other alphabetic orthographies, English spelling does not represent non-contrastive phonetic sounds (that is, sub-phonemic sounds). The fact that the letter <ʰ> is pronounced with aspiration [t^h] at the beginning of words is never indicated in the spelling, and, indeed, this phonetic detail is probably not noticeable to the average native speaker not trained in phonetics. However, unlike some orthographies, English orthography often represents a very abstract underlying representation (or morphophonemic form) of English words.^[4]

“[T]he postulated underlying forms are systematically related to the conventional orthography ... and are, as is well known, related to the underlying forms of a much earlier historical stage of the language. There has, in other words, been little change in lexical representation since Middle English, and, consequently, we would expect ... that lexical representation would differ very little from dialect to dialect in Modern English ... [and] that conventional orthography is probably fairly close to optimal for all modern English dialects, as well as for the attested dialects of the past several hundred years.”^[5]

In these cases, a given morpheme (i.e. a component of a word) is represented with a single spelling despite the fact that it is pronounced differently (i.e. has different surface representations) in different environments. An example is the past tense suffix <-ed>, which may be pronounced variously as /t/, /d/, or /ɪd/ (for example, *dip* /'dɪp/, *dipped* /'dɪpt/, *boom* /'bu:m/, *boomed* /'bu:md/, *loot* /'lu:t/, *looted* /'lu:tɪd/). Because these different pronunciations of <-ed> can be predicted by a few phonological rules, only a single spelling is needed in the orthography.

Another example involves the vowel differences (with accompanying stress pattern changes) in several related words. For instance, the word *photographer* is derived from the word *photograph* by adding the derivational suffix <-er>. When this suffix is added, the vowel pronunciations change largely owing to the moveable stress, a feature of the indo-European language group:

Spelling	Pronunciation
<i>photograph</i>	English pronunciation: /'fɒtəgrɑ:f/
<i>photographer</i>	English pronunciation: /fə'tɒgrəfər/
<i>photographical</i>	English pronunciation: /fəʊtə'græfɪkəl/

It could be argued that the underlying representation of *photo* is a single phonological form, such as English pronunciation: /'fɒtəgrɑ:f/. Since the (surface) pronunciation of the vowels can be predicted by phonological rules according to the different stress patterns, the orthography only needs to have one spelling that corresponds to the underlying form. Other examples of this type include words with the <-ity> suffix (as in *agile* vs *agility*, *acid* vs *acidity*, *divine* vs *divinity*, *sane* vs *sanity*, etc.). (See also: Trisyllabic laxing.)

Another example includes words like *sign* (pronounced /'saɪn/) and *bomb* (pronounced /'bɒm/) where the "silent" letters <g> and , respectively, seem to be "inert" letters with no functional role. However, there are the related words *signature* and *bombard* in which the so-called "silent" letters are pronounced /'sɪgnətʃər/ and /bɒm'bɑ:d/, respectively. Here it could be argued that the underlying representation of *sign* and *bomb* is /saɪgn/ and /bɒmb/ or /bɑmb/, in which the underlying /g/ and /b/ are only pronounced in the surface forms when followed by certain suffixes (<-ature>, <-ard>). Otherwise, the /g/ and /b/ are not realized in the surface pronunciation (e.g. when standing alone, or when followed by suffixes like <-ing> or <-er>). In these cases, the orthography indicates the underlying consonants that are present in certain words but are absent in other related words. Other examples include the <ʰ> in *fast* /'fɑ:st/ and *fasten* /'fɑ:sən/, and the <h> in *heir* /'eɪr/ and *inherit* /ɪn'hɛrɪt/.

Another example includes words like *mean* (pronounced /'mi:n/) and *meant* (pronounced /'meɪnt/). Here the vowel spelling <ea> is pronounced differently in the two related words. Thus, again the orthography uses only a single spelling that corresponds to the single morphemic form rather than to the surface phonological form.

English orthography does not always provide an underlying representation; sometimes it provides an intermediate representation between the underlying form and the surface pronunciation. This is the case with the spelling of the

regular plural morpheme, which is written as either <s> (as in *tick, ticks* and *mite, mites*) or <es> (as in *box, boxes*). Here the spelling <s> is pronounced either /s/ or /z/ (depending on the environment, e.g. *ticks* /'tɪks/ and *pigs* /'pɪgz/) while <es> is usually pronounced /ɪz/ (e.g. *boxes* /'bɒksɪz/). Thus, there are two different spellings that correspond to the single underlying representation /z/ of the plural suffix and the three surface forms. The spelling indicates the insertion of /ɪ/ before the /z/ in the spelling <es>, but does not indicate the devoiced /s/ distinctly from the unaffected /z/ in the spelling <s>.

The abstract representation of words as indicated by the orthography can be considered advantageous since it makes etymological relationships more apparent to English readers. This makes writing English more complex, but arguably makes reading English more efficient.^[6] However, very abstract underlying representations, such as that of Chomsky & Halle (1968) or of underspecification theories, are sometimes considered too abstract to accurately reflect the linguistic knowledge of native speakers. Followers of these arguments believe the less abstract surface forms are more "psychologically real" and thus more useful in terms of pedagogy.^[7]

Diacritics

English includes some words that can be written with accent marks. These words have mostly been imported from other languages, usually French. As imported words become increasingly naturalised, there is an increasing tendency to omit the accent marks, even in formal writing. For example, words such as *rôle* and *hôtel* were first seen with accents when they were borrowed into English, but now the accent is almost never used. The words were originally considered French borrowings – even accused by some of being foreign phrases used where English alternatives would suffice – but today their French origin is largely forgotten. The strongest tendency to retain the accent is in words that are atypical of English morphology and therefore still perceived as slightly foreign. For example, *café* and *pâté* both have a pronounced final *e*, which would be "silent" by the normal English pronunciation rules. In a few cases, there are regional differences: for instance, the first accent on *résumé* has generally disappeared in the U.S., but is retained in the UK.

Further examples of words often retaining diacritics when used in English are: *appliqué, attaché, blasé, bric-à-brac, brötchen*,^[8] *cliché, crème, crêpe, façade, fiancé(e), flambé, naïve, naïveté, né(e), papier-mâché, passé, piñata, protégé, résumé, risqué, über-, voilà*. Italics, with appropriate accents, are generally applied to foreign terms that are uncommonly used in or have not been assimilated into English: for example, *adiós, coup d'état, crème brûlée, pièce de résistance, raison d'être, über (übermensch), vis-à-vis*.

It was formerly common in English to use a diaeresis mark to indicate a hiatus: for example, *coöperate, daïs, reëlect*. *The New Yorker* and *Technology Review* magazines still use it for this purpose, even though it is increasingly rare in modern English. Nowadays the diaeresis is normally left out (*cooperate*), or a hyphen is used (*co-operate*). It is, however, still common in loanwords such as *naïve* and *noël*.

Written accents are also used occasionally in poetry and scripts for dramatic performances to indicate that a certain normally unstressed syllable in a word should be stressed for dramatic effect, or to keep with the metre of the poetry. This use is frequently seen in archaic and pseudoarchaic writings with the *-ed* suffix, to indicate that the *e* should be fully pronounced, as with *cursèd*.

Ligatures

In certain older texts (typically British), the use of the ligatures æ and œ is common in words such as *archæology, diarrhæa*, and *encyclopædia*. Such words have Latin or Greek origin. Nowadays, the ligatures have been generally replaced in British English by the separated digraph *ae* and *oe* (*encyclopaedia, diarrhoea*; but usually *economy, ecology*) and in American English by *e* (*encyclopedia, diarrhea*; but usually *paeon, amoeba, oedipal, Caesar*). In some cases, usage may vary; for instance, both *encyclopedia* and *encyclopaedia* are current in the UK.

Irregularities - phonic

The English spelling system, compared to the systems used in many other languages, is quite irregular and complex. Although French presents a similar degree of difficulty when *encoding* (writing), English is more difficult when *decoding* (reading). For example, in French the English **long oo** sound (as in 'food'), can be spelt 'ou', 'ous', 'out' and 'oux' (*ou, nous, tout, choux*) but the pronunciation of those graphemes is always the same. In English, the **long oo** sound can be spelt with 'oo' and with 'u', 'u-e', 'ui', 'ue', 'o', 'oe', 'o-e', 'o-b', 'ou', 'ough' and 'ew' (food - truth, rude, fruit, blue, to, shoe, move, tomb, group, through, flew), but 9 of the 11 alternative graphemes have other pronunciations as well: *rub, bui'ld, go, toe, drove, comb, out, rough, sew*.

No other European orthography allows such frequent use of identical letters for different sounds. English has never had any formal regulating authority for spelling, like the Spanish Real Academia Española, Italian Accademia della Crusca or the French Académie française. This is perhaps the reason why the English spelling system has become so irregular.

The basic English spelling system

English dialects differ little in the pronunciation of consonants, but greatly in the pronunciation of vowels. This also reflects historical patterns: Consonant pronunciation has changed little from Old English times, but vowel pronunciation has changed drastically.

Most English dialects have 24 consonants, as exemplified in the following words and graphemes:

b, ch, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, ng, p, r, s, sh, t, v, w, y, z, voiced th (this), *unvoiced th* (think), and **zh** (as in vision).

Standard British English has about 20 vowels, as exemplified in the following words and graphemes:

- 19 *full vowels* as in **at, aim, fair, cart, autumn, end, eel, term, it, tie, on, toe, oil, too, fort, up, few, out, could**
- and the unstressed, sometimes barely audible *half vowel* (or schwa) as in 'flatten, **decide, abandon**.

Standard American English has about 17 vowels, as exemplified in the following words and graphemes:

- 15 *full vowels* as in **at, aim, autumn, end, eel, it, tie, on, toe, oil, too, up, few, out, could**
- the *rhotic vowel* as in **term**
- and the unstressed, barely audible *half vowel* (or schwa) as in 'flatten, **decide, abandon**.

Note that the biggest difference between the standard American and British vowel systems relates to the letter **r**, which is always pronounced as a consonant in American English but which drops out in British English when not followed by a vowel, modifying the pronunciation of the previous vowel in the process.

Spelling irregularities

Attempts to regularize or reform the language, including spelling reform, have usually met with failure. The only significant exceptions were the reforms of Noah Webster which resulted in many of the differences between British and American spelling, such as *center/centre*, and *dialog/dialogue*. (Other differences, such as *-ize/-ise* in *realize/realise* etc, came about separately; see American and British English spelling differences for details.)

Besides the quirks the English spelling system has inherited from its past, there are other idiosyncrasies in spelling that make it tricky to learn. English contains 24–27 (depending on dialect) separate consonant phonemes and, depending on dialect, anywhere from fourteen to twenty vowels. However, there are only 26 letters in the modern English alphabet, so there cannot be a one-to-one correspondence between letters and sounds. Many sounds are spelled using different letters or multiple letters, and for those words whose pronunciation is predictable from the spelling, the sounds denoted by the letters depend on the surrounding letters. For example, the digraph *th* represents two different sounds (the voiced interdental fricative and the voiceless interdental fricative) (see Pronunciation of English *th*), and the voiceless alveolar fricative can be represented by the letters *s* and *c*.

It is, however, not the shortage of letters which makes English spelling irregular. Its irregularities are caused by the use of many different graphemes for some of its sounds, such as the **long oo, ee and oe** sounds (**too, true, shoe, flew, through; sleeve, leave, even, seize, siege; stole, coal, bowl, roll, old, mould**), and the use of identical graphemes for spelling different sounds (**over, oven, move**).

Furthermore, English makes no attempt to Anglicise the spellings of most recent loanwords, but preserves the foreign spellings, even when they employ exotic conventions like the Polish *cz* in *Czech* or the Old Norse *ff* in *fford* (although New Zealand English exclusively spells it *fiord*). In fact, instead of loans being respelled to conform to English spelling standards, sometimes the pronunciation changes as a result of pressure from the spelling. One example of this is the word *ski*, which was adopted from Norwegian in the mid-18th century, although it did not become common until 1900. It used to be pronounced *shee*, which is similar to the Norwegian pronunciation, but the increasing popularity of the sport after the middle of the 20th century helped the *sk* pronunciation replace it.

Of course, such a philosophy can be taken too far. For instance, there was also a period when the spelling of words was altered in what is now regarded as a misguided attempt to make them conform to what were perceived to be the etymological origins of the words. For example, the letter *b* was added to *debt* (originally *dette*) in an attempt to link it to the Latin *debitum*, and the letter *s* in *island* is a misplaced attempt to link it to Latin *insula* instead of the Norse word *igland*, which is the true origin of the English word. The letter *p* in *ptarmigan* has no etymological justification whatsoever.

The spelling of English continues to evolve. Many loanwords come from languages where the pronunciation of vowels corresponds to the way they were pronounced in Old English, which is similar to the Italian or Spanish pronunciation of the vowels, and is the value the vowel symbols [a], [e], [i], [o], and [u] have in the International Phonetic Alphabet. As a result, there is a somewhat regular system of pronouncing "foreign" words in English, and some borrowed words have had their spelling changed to conform to this system. For example, *Hindu* used to be spelled *Hindoo*, and the name *Maria* used to be pronounced like the name *Mariah*, but was changed to conform to this system. It has been argued that this influence probably started with the introduction of many Italian words into English during the Renaissance, in fields like music, from which come the words *andante, viola, forte*, etc.

Commercial advertisers have also had an effect on English spelling. In attempts to differentiate their products from others, they introduce new or simplified spellings like *lite* instead of *light*, *thru* instead of *through*, *smokey* instead of *smoky* (for "smokey bacon" flavour crisps), and *rucsac* instead of *rucksack*. The spellings of personal names have also been a source of spelling innovations: affectionate versions of women's names that sound the same as men's names have been spelled differently: *Nikki* and *Nicky*, *Toni* and *Tony*, *Jo* and *Joe*.

As examples of the idiosyncratic nature of English spelling, the combination *ou* can be pronounced in at least six different ways: /ə/ in *famous*, /ɜː/ in *journey*, /aʊ/ in *loud*, /ʊ/ in *should*, /uː/ in *you*, /ʊə/ in *tour*; and the vowel sound /iː/ in *me* can be spelt in at least ten different ways: *paediatric, me, seat, seem, ceiling, people, chimney, machine, siege, phoenix*. (These examples assume a more-or-less standard non-regional British English accent. Other accents will vary.)

Sometimes everyday speakers of English change a counterintuitive pronunciation simply because it is counterintuitive. Changes like this are not usually seen as "standard", but can become standard if used enough. An example is the word *miniscule*, which still competes with its original spelling of *minuscule*, though this might also be because of analogy with the word *mini*. A further example is the modern pronunciation of *tissue*.

History

Inconsistencies and irregularities in English spelling have gradually increased in number throughout the history of the English language. There are a number of contributing factors. First, gradual changes in pronunciation, such as the Great Vowel Shift, account for a tremendous number of irregularities. Second, relatively recent loan words from other languages generally carry their original spellings, which are often not phonetic in English. The Romanization of languages (e.g., Chinese) using alphabets derived from the Latin alphabet has further complicated this problem,

for example when pronouncing Chinese place names. Third, some prescriptivists have had partial success in their attempts to normalize the English language, forcing a change in spelling but not in pronunciation.

The regular spelling system of Old English was swept away by the Norman Conquest, and English itself was eclipsed by Norman French for three centuries, eventually emerging with its spelling much influenced by French. English had also borrowed large numbers of words from French, which for reasons of prestige and familiarity kept their French spellings. The spelling of Middle English, such as in the writings of Geoffrey Chaucer, is very irregular and inconsistent, with the same word being spelled differently, sometimes even in the same sentence. However, these were generally much better guides to pronunciation than modern English spelling can honestly claim.

For example, the sound /ʌ/, normally written *u*, is spelled with an *o* in *son*, *love*, *come*, etc., due to Norman spelling conventions which prohibited writing *u* before *v*, *m*, *n* due to the graphical confusion that would result. (*v*, *u*, *n* were identically written with two minims in Norman handwriting; *w* was written as two *u* letters; *m* was written with three minims, hence *mm* looked like *vun*, *nvu*, *uvu*, etc.) Similarly, spelling conventions also prohibited final *v*. Hence the identical spellings of the three different vowel sounds in *love*, *grove* and *prove* are due to ambiguity in the Middle English spelling system, not sound change.

There was also a series of linguistic sound changes towards the end of this period, including the Great Vowel Shift, which resulted in the *i* in *mine*, for example, changing from a pure vowel to a diphthong. These changes for the most part did not detract from the rule-governed nature of the spelling system; but in some cases they introduced confusing inconsistencies, like the well-known example of the many pronunciations of *ough* (*rough*, *through*, *though*, *trough*, *plough*, etc.). Most of these changes happened before the arrival of printing in England. However, the arrival of the printing press merely froze the current system, rather than providing the impetus for a realignment of spelling with pronunciation. Furthermore, it introduced further inconsistencies, partly because of the use of typesetters trained abroad, particularly in the Low Countries. For example, the *h* in *ghost* was influenced by Dutch.^[9] The addition and deletion of a silent *e* at the ends of words was also sometimes used to make the right-hand margin line up more neatly.^[9]

By the time dictionaries were introduced in the mid 17th century, the spelling system of English started to stabilize, and by the 19th century, most words had set spellings.

"Ough" words

The most notorious group of letters in the English language, *ough*, is commonly pronounced at least ten different ways, six of which are illustrated in the construct, *Though the tough cough and hiccough plough him through*, which is quoted by Robert A. Heinlein in *The Door into Summer* to illustrate the difficulties facing automated speech transcription and reading. *Ough* is in fact a word in its own right; it is an exclamation of disgust similar to *ugh*.

- *though*: /oʊ/ as in *toe*; (other examples: *dough*)
- *tough*: /ʌf/ as in *cuff*; (other examples: *rough*, *enough*)
- *cough*: /ɒf/ as in *off*; (other examples: *Gough* (name, some pronunciations))
- *hiccough* (a now uncommon variant of *hiccup*): /ʌp/ as in *up*; (unique)
- *plough*: /aʊ/ as in *cow*; (other examples: *sough*, *drought*, *bough*, and the name *Doughty*)
- *through*: /u:/ as in *blue*;
- *nought*: /ɔ:/ as in *caught*. (other examples: *ought*, *sought*, *thought*, *brought*)
- *lough*: /ɒx/ with a rough breathing sound like the **ch** in *loch*

Finally, there is the place name Loughborough, where the first *ough* has the sound as in *cuff* and the second rhymes either with *dough* or *thorough* - the former being more common among locals.

Spelling patterns

Spelling to sound correspondences

Vowels

In a generative approach to English spelling, Rollins (2004) identifies twenty main orthographic vowels of stressed syllables that are grouped into four main categories: "Lax", "Tense", "Heavy", "Tense-R". (As this classification is based on orthography, not all orthographic "lax" vowels are necessarily phonologically lax.)

Letter	Lax	Tense	Heavy	Tense-R	Letter	Lax	Tense	Heavy	Tense-R
a	/æ/ <i>man</i>	/eɪ/ <i>mane</i>	/ɑ/ <i>mar</i>	/ɛ/ <i>mare</i>	a	/æ/ <i>man</i>	/eɪ/ <i>mane</i>	/ɑː/ <i>mar</i>	/ɛə/ <i>mare</i>
e	/ɛ/ <i>met</i>	/i/ <i>mete</i>	/ɜ/ <i>her</i>	/ɪ/ <i>here</i>	e	/ɛ/ <i>met</i>	/iː/ <i>mete</i>	/ɜː/ <i>her</i>	/ɪə/ <i>here</i>
i	/ɪ/ <i>win</i>	/aɪ/ <i>wine</i>	/ɜ/ <i>fir</i>	/aɪ/ <i>fire</i>	i	/ɪ/ <i>win</i>	/aɪ/ <i>wine</i>	/ɜː/ <i>fir</i>	/aɪə/ <i>fire</i>
o	/ɑ/ <i>mop</i>	/oʊ/ <i>mope</i>	/ɔ/ <i>for, fore</i>		o	/ɒ/ <i>mop</i>	/əʊ/ <i>mope</i>	/ɔː/ <i>for, fore</i>	
u	/ʌ/ <i>hug</i>	/ju/ <i>huge</i>	/ɜ/ <i>cur</i>	/jʊ/ <i>cure</i>	u	/ʌ/ <i>hug</i>	/juː/ <i>huge</i>	/ɜː/ <i>cur</i>	/jʊə/ <i>cure</i>
u	/ʊ/ <i>push</i>	/u/ <i>rude</i>	—	/ʊ/ <i>sure</i>	u	/ʊ/ <i>push</i>	/uː/ <i>rude</i>	—	/ʊə/ <i>sure</i>

For instance, the letter *a* can represent the lax vowel /æ/, tense /eɪ/, heavy /ɑ(:)/, or tense-r /ɛ(ə)/. Heavy and tense-r vowels are the respective lax and tense counterparts followed by the letter *r*.

Tense vowels are distinguished from lax vowels with a "silent" *e* letter that is added at the end of words. Thus, the letter *a* in *hat* is lax /æ/, but when the letter *e* is added in the word *hate* the letter *a* is tense /eɪ/. Similarly, heavy and tense-r vowels pattern together: the letters *ar* in *car* are heavy /ɑr/, the letters *ar* followed by silent *e* in the word *care* are /ɛər/. The letter *u* represents two different vowel patterns, one being /ʌ/, /juː/, /ə/, /jʊ/, the other /ʊ/, /uː/, /ʊ/. There is no distinction between heavy and tense-r vowels with the letter *o*, and the letter *u* in the /ʊ-uː-ʊ/ pattern does not have a heavy vowel member.

Besides silent *e*, another strategy for indicating tense and tense-r vowels, is the addition of another orthographic vowel forming a digraph. In this case, the first vowel is usually the main vowel while the second vowel is the "marking" vowel. For example, the word *man* has a lax *a* pronounced /æ/, but with the addition of *i* (as the digraph *ai*) in the word *main* the *a* is marked as tense and pronounced /eɪ/. These two strategies produce words that are spelled differently but pronounced identically, as in *mane* (silent *e* strategy), *main* (digraph strategy) and *Maine* (both strategies). The use of two different strategies relates to the function of distinguishing between words that would otherwise be homonyms.

Besides the 20 basic vowel spellings, Rollins (2004) has a reduced vowel category (representing the sounds /ə, ɪ/) and a miscellaneous category (representing the sounds /ɔɪ, aʊ, aɪ, aʊ/ and /j/+V, /w/+V, V+V).

Combinations of vowel letters

To reduce dialectal difficulties, the sound values given here correspond to the conventions at Wikipedia:IPA for English.

Spelling	Major value (IPA)	Examples of major value	Minor values (IPA)	Examples of minor value	Exceptions
a before multiple consonants or in word-final syllables	/æ/	cat, acrobat, banned			/i:/ karaoke /ɛ/ bass /ɑ:/ father, grant, after
a...e	/ɛ/	violate, grace	/ə/	adjectives ending in -ate, e.g. desperate	
a before <i>single consonant</i> (stressed, non-word-final syllables)	/ɛ/	dating, lumbago	/ɛ/ /æ/	many, any radical	
a (unstressed syllables)	/ə/	another, about			
aa	/ɑ:/	baa			/ɛ/ quaalude
ae	/i:/	encyclopaedia	/ɛ/	aesthetic	/ɛ/ reggae /a/ maestro
ai, ai...e	/ɛ/	bait, cocaine			/æ/ plaid /ɪ/ bargain /ɛ/ said /a/ shanghai
ao	/ɛ/	gaol			
au	/ɔ:/	taut, author			/ɛ/ gauge /oʊ/ mauve /ɔ/ sausage
aw	/ɔ:/	jaw			
ay, aye	/ɛ/	day	/aɪ/	kayak, aye	/i:/ quay/ɛ/ says
e before <i>single consonant</i> (stressed, non-word-final syllables)	/i:/	receding	/ɛ/	ukulele, cafe	
e before multiple consonants or in word-final syllables	/ɛ/	get, better			/ɪ/ pretty
word-final e	/i:/	be, he			
e...e	/i:/	cede, gene			/ɛ/ crepe
ea	/i:/	beach, eating	/ɛ/	bread, healthy	/ɛ/ break, great, steak
ea...e	/i:/	please			/ɛ/ cleanse
eau	/oʊ/	beau			/ɔ/ bureaucracy
ee	/i:/	bee, feed			/ɛ/ matinee
ei, ei...e	/ɛ/	eight, veil	/i:/ /aɪ/	deceive, seize heist, height	/ɪ/ counterfeit /ɛ/ heifer
eo	/ɛ/	leopard, jeopardy	/i:/	people	/oʊ/ yeoman /ɪə/ leotard

ew	/ju:/	dew			/oʊ/ sew
ey	/eɪ/	grey, obey			/i:/ key, geyser, Ceylon
eye	/aɪ/	eye			
i before <i>single consonant</i> (stressed, non-word-final syllables)	/aɪ/	shining			/æ/ meringue
i before multiple consonants or in word-final syllables	/ɪ/	bit, hitting			
word-final i	/i:/	ski			
i...e	/aɪ/	shine, guide			/i:/ machine /ɪ/ give, medicine
ie	/aɪ/	die, tie	/i:/	field	/ɪ/ sieve /ɛ/ friend
ie...e	/i:/	hygiene			
ieu	/ju:/	lieu, adieu			
o before multiple consonants or in word-final syllables	/ɒ/	dot	/ʌ/	son	/ʊ/ wolf
o before <i>single consonant</i> (stressed, non-word-final syllables)	/oʊ/	omen, potent	/ɒ/	body	/ɪ/ women
word-final o	/oʊ/	banjo, go	/u:/	to, who, two	
o...e	/oʊ/	doze	/u:/	move, lose	/ʌ/ come
oa	/oʊ/	boat			/ɔ:/ broad
oe	/oʊ/	toe, foe	/i:/ /u:/	amoeba shoe, canoe	/ʌ/ does /ɪ/ oedema /ɛ/ foetid
oeu	/u:/	manoeuvre			
oi	/ɔɪ/	coin			/waɪ/ choir
oo before k,d	/ʊ/	look, wood			/u:/ spook
oo elsewhere	/u:/	tool	/ʌ/	blood	/oʊ/ brooch
ou	/aʊ/	out	/u:/	soup, you, through	/ʊ/ courier, should /oʊ/ soul /ʌ/ touch, enough /ɔ/ cough
ow	/aʊ/	cow	/oʊ/	yellow, know, rainbow	
u before multiple consonants or in word-final syllables	/ʌ/	butter, dump	/ʊ/	put, full	
u before <i>single consonant</i> (stressed, non-word-final syllables)	/u:/	luminous			/ɪ/ busy /ɛ/ bury

u...e	/ju:/ or /u:/	flute		
ue	/u:/	blue		
ui	/u:/	fruit		/ɪ/ build
uy, uye	/aɪ/	buy, gayed		
y	/ɪ/	myth, cryptic		/ə/ beryl
-y	/i:/	city, happy		
y...e	/aɪ/	type		
-ye	/aɪ/	bye		

Consonants

Notes:

- In the tables, the hyphen has two different meanings. A hyphen after the letter indicates that it *must* be at the beginning of a *syllable*, eg j- in jumper and ajar. A hyphen before the letter indicates that it *cannot* be at the beginning of a *word*, eg -ck in sick and ticket.
- More specific rules take precedence over more general ones, eg "c- before e, i or y" takes precedence over "c".
- Where the letter combination is described as "word-final", inflectional suffixes may be added without changing the pronunciation, e.g. catalogues.
- The dialect used is RP.
- Isolated foreign borrowings are excluded.
- This relies highly on knowledge of where the stress in a word is, but English has no consistent way of showing stress.

Spelling	Major value (IPA)	Examples of major value	Other values	Examples of other values
b, -bb	/b/	bit, rabbit, obtain	∅	bdellium, debtor
c before e, i or y	/s/	cellar, city, cyst, face, prince, nicer	/tʃ/ /ʃ/ /k/	cello, vermicelli special, liquorice Celts, chicer
c	/k/	cat, cross	/s/	Caesium
-cc before e, i or y	/ks/	accept, eccentric, occidental	/k/ /tʃ/ /s/	soccer, recce, siccing boce, breccia, cappuccino flaccid
-cc	/k/	account, accrue, occur, yucca		
ch	/tʃ/	chase, chin, attached, chore	/k/ /ʃ/ /h/	chasm, chimera, ached, chord chaise, machine, cached, parachute chutzpah
-ck	/k/	tack, ticket		
cn-	/n/	cnidarian		
ct-	/t/	ctenoid		
ct	/kt/	victim	/t/	victual
d, -dd	/d/	dive, ladder	/dʒ/ ∅	graduate, gradual (both also /dj/ in RP) Wednesday, handsome
-dg before e, i, or y	/dʒ/	ledger		
f, -ff	/f/	fine, off	/v/	of

g before e, i or y	/dʒ/	gentle, magic, gyrate, page, college	/g/ /ʒ/	get, give, girl, begin collage, gigue
g, -gg	/g/	go, great, stagger	/dʒ/	suggest, exaggerate
gh-	/g/	ghost, ghastly		
-gh	∅	dough, high	/f/ /x/ or /k/ /g/ or /x/ /p/	laugh, enough lough ugh! hiccough
-ght	/t/	right, daughter, bought	/ft/	draught, laughter
-gm	/m/	diaphragm, phlegm		
gn-	/n/	gnome, gnaw		
-gn	/n/	signing, impugned	/gn/	signify, repugnant
h	/h/	he, alcohol	∅	vehicle, honest, hono(u)r, piranha
h- after ex	∅	exhibit, exhaust	/h/	exhale
j-	/dʒ/	jump, ajar	/j/ /ʒ/ ∅	Hallelujah Jean Marijuana
k, -kk	/k/	key, bake, trekking		
kn-	/n/	knee, knock		
l,	/l/	line, valve, bulk	∅	halve, balk
-ll-	/l/	valley	/j/	tortilla
m, -mm	/m/	mine, hammer		
-mb	/m/	climbed, comber, numbing	/mb/	imbed, somber, number
mn-	/n/	mnemonic		
-mn	/m/	hymn, autumn, condemner	/mn/	hymnal, alumni, chimney
n, -nn	/n/	nice, funny		
-n before /k/	/ŋ/	link, plonk, anchor		
-ng	/ŋ/	long, kingly, hanger, singer, clingy	/ŋg/ /ndʒ/	anger, finger, England danger, ginger, dingy
p, -pp	/p/	pill, happy, soup, corpse, script	∅	coup, corps, receipt
(p)ph	/f/	photograph, sapphire	/v/	Stephen
pn-	/n/	pneumonia, pneumatic		
ps-	/s/	psyche, psalm, pshaw	/ps/	psst
pt-	/t/	ptomaine, ptarmigan		
q	/k/	Iraq		
r-, -rr	/r/	ray, parrot		
rh, -rrh	/r/	rhyme, diarrhoea		
-r, -rr, -rrh when followed by a consonant	∅ in non-rhotic dialects such as RP, /r/ in rhotic dialects such as GA	bar, bare, catarrh		

s, -ss	/s/ /z/ /ʒ/ Ø	song, ask, message, misled	/z/ /ʒ/ Ø	scissors, dessert, dissolve, Islam sugar, tissue, aggression vision islet, aisle
-s- between vowels	/z/	rose, prison	/s/	house, base
word-final -s morpheme after a voiceless sound	/s/	pets, shops		
word-final -s morpheme after a voiced sound	/z/	beds, magazines		
sc- before e, i or y	/s/	scene, scepter, scissors, scythe	/sk/ /ʃ/	sceptic, scirrhous fascism
sch-	/sk/	school, scheme, schizo	/ʃ/ /s/	schedule (also /sk/), schist schism (also /sk/)
sh	/ʃ/	shin		
t, -tt	/t/ /tʃ/ Ø	ten, bitter, cation, chaste, wallet	/ʃ/ /tʃ/ Ø	ratio, Martian question, bastion castle, chasten, ballet
-tch	/tʃ/	batch, kitchen		
th	/θ/ /ð/	thin, both, the, bothers	/t/ /tθ/ /th/ Ø	thyme, Thames eighth outhouse, potherb asthma
v, -vv	/v/	vine, savvy		
w	/w/ Ø /uː/	sward, swerve, wale	Ø /uː/	sword, answer, gunwale cwm
wh- before o	/h/	who, whole	/w/	whopping, whorl
wh-	/w/ (/hw/ in dialects with this phoneme)	wheel		
wr-	/r/	wrong		
x-	/z/	xylophone		
-xc before e or i	/ks/	excellent, excited		
-xc	/ksk/	excuse		
-x	/ks/	box	/gz/ /kʃ/	anxiety anxious
y-	/j/	yes		
z, -zz	/z/	zoo, pizzazz	/ts/	schizo, pizzas

Combinations of consonant and vowel letters

Spelling	Major value (IPA)	Examples of major value	Minor values (IPA)	Examples of minor value	Exceptions
word-final -age suffix	/ɪdʒ/	damage, bondage			
ah	/ɑː/	blah			
al	/æɪ/	pal, talcum, algae, alp	/ɔːl/	bald, falcon	
alf	/ɑːf/ (RP) /æf/ (GA)	calf, half	/æɪ/	alfalfa, malfeasance	/ɔɪf/ palfrey
alk	/ɔːk/	walk, chalking, talkative	/æɪk/	alkaline, grimalkin	/ɔɪk/ balkanise
all	/ɔːl/ /æɪ/	call, fallout, smaller shall, callus, fallow	/ɔɪ/ /(ə)ɪ/	wallet, swallow allow, dialled	/ɛɪ/ (GA) marshmallow, pall-mall
alm	/ɑːm/	calm, almond, palmistry	/æɪm/ /ɔːlm/	dalmatian, salmonella almanac, almost	/æm/ salmon /(ə)lm/ signalman
alt	/ɔɪt/ (RP) /ɔɪt/ (GA)	alter, malt, salty, basalt	/æɪt/ /ɔːlt/	alto, shalt, saltation altar, although, asphalt	/ɔɪ/ gestalt (GA) /(ə)ɪt/ royalty, penalty
aoh, oh	/oʊ/	pharaoh, oh			
unstressed ci- before a vowel	/j/	special, gracious	/si/	species	
-cqu	/kw/	acquaint, acquire	/k/	lacquer, racquet	
word-final -ed morpheme after /t/ or /d/*	/ɪd/	waited			
word-final -ed morpheme after a voiceless sound*	/t/	topped, surfed	/ɛd/	biped, unfed	
word-final -ed morpheme after a voiced sound*	/d/	climbed, failed, ordered	/ɛd/	imbed, misled, infrared	
eh	/eɪ/	eh			
word-final -es morpheme**	/ɪz/	washes, boxes			
unstressed ex- before a vowel or h	/ɪgz/	exist, examine, exhaust	/ɛks/	exhale	
unstressed -ften	/fən/	soften, often			
gu- before e or i	/g/	guest, guide	/gw/	linguistics	
word-final -gue	/g/	catalogue, plague, colleague	/gju/	argue, redargue, ague, Montague	/gweɪ/ segue
word-final -le after a consonant	/əl/	little, table			
-(a)isle	/aɪəl/	aisle, isle, enisle, lisle, Carlisle			
word-final -ngue	/ŋ/	tongue	/ŋgeɪ/	dengue(+/ŋgi/), distingué, merengue,	
old	/oʊld/	blindfold, older, bold	/əld/	scaffold, kobold (also /ɔɪld/	
olk	/oʊk/	yolk, folk			
oll	/ɔɪ/	doll, follow, collect, holler	/oʊɪ/	roll, stroller, polling, tollway	
olm	/ɔɪlm/	olm, dolmen	/oʊlm/	enrolment, holmium	/oʊm/ holm (oak)

qu-	/kw/	queen, quick	/k/	liquor, mosquito	
word-final -que	/k/	mos que , bis que	/keɪ/	risque	/kjuː/ barbe que
word-final -re after a consonant	/ər/	met re , fib re			
unstressed sci- before a vowel	/ʃ/	conscience	/si/	omniscient (RP)	
-sacle	/səl/	corpusc le , musc le			
unstressed -si before a vowel	/ʃ/	expansion	/ʒ/	division, illusion	/zi/ physiology, busier, cesium /si/ tarsier, flimsiest
unstressed -ssi before a vowel	/ʃ/	mission	/si/	potassium, dossier	
unstressed -sten	/sən/	listen, fasten	/stən/	tungsten, Austen, existent	
unstressed -stle	/səl/	whistle, rustle			
unstressed -sure	/ʒər/	leisure, treasure			
unstressed -ti before a vowel	/ʃ/	nation, ambitious	/ʒ/	equation	/ti/ patio, /taɪ/ cation
unstressed -ture	/tʃər/	nature, picture			
word-initial wa-	/wɒ/	watch, want, warrior	/wæ/	wacky	
word-initial wor-	/wɜː/	work, worse			
word-initial war-	/wɔːr/	warning, warts	/wɛər/	wares, wary	
unstressed -zure	/ʒər/	seizure, azure			

* There is no way to tell if it is the morpheme or an integral part of the word. Compare **snaked** and **naked**.

** Same as above; compare the two pronunciations of **axes**.

Small text indicates rare words. Loans words: **SP** for Spanish, **FR** for French.

Sound to spelling correspondences

The following table shows for each sound, the various spelling patterns used to denote it. The symbol "... " stands for an intervening consonant. The letter sequences are in order of frequency with the most common first. Some of these patterns are very rare or unique, such as *au* for the [æ] sound in *laugh* (some accents). In some cases, the spellings shown are found in only one known English word (such as "mh" for /m/, or "yrrh" for /ʒr/).

Consonants		
IPA	Spelling	Examples
/p/	p, pp, ph, gh	pill, happy, Phuket, hiccough
/b/	b, bb, bh	bit, rabbit, Bhutan
/t/	t, tt, ed, pt, th, ct	ten, hitter, topped, pterodactyl, thyme, ctenoid
/d/	d, dd, ed, dh	dive, ladder, failed, dharm
/g/	g, gg, gue, gh	go, stagger, catalogue, ghost
/k/	c, k, ck, ch, cc, qu, q, cq, cu, que, kk, kh	cat, key, tack, chord, account, liquor, Iraq, acquaint, biscuit, mosque, trekker, khan
/m/	m, mm, mb, mn, mh, gm, chm	mine, hammer, climb, hymn, mho, diaphragm, drachm
/n/	n, nn, kn, gn, pn, nh, cn, mn	nice, funny, knee, gnome, pneumonia, piranha, cnidarian, mnemonic, fighting

/ŋ/	ng, n, ngue, ngh	sing, link, tongue, Singh
/r/	r, rr, wr, rh, rrh	ray, parrot, wrong, rhyme, diarrh(o)ea
/f/	f, ph, ff, gh, pph, u	fine, physical, off, laugh, sapphire, lieutenant (Br)
/v/	v, vv, f, ph	vine, savvy, of, Stephen
/θ/	th, chth, phth, tth	thin, chthonic, phthisis, Matthew
/ð/	th	them, breathe
/s/	s, c, ss, sc, st, ps, sch (in some dialects), cc, se, ce, z (in some dialects)	song, city, mess, scene, listen, psychology, schism, flaccid, horse, juice, citizen
/z/	s, z, x, zz, ss, ze, c (in some dialects)	has, zoo, xylophone, fuzz, scissors, breeze, electricity
/ʃ/	sh, ti, ci, ssi, si, ss, ch, s, sci, ce, sch, sc	shin, nation, special, mission, expansion, tissue, machine, sugar, conscience, ocean, schmooze, crescendo
/ʒ/	si, s, g, z, j, zh, ti, sh (in some dialects)	division, leisure, genre, seizure, jeté, Zhytomyr, equation, Pershing
/tʃ/	ch, t, tch, ti, c, cz, tsch	chin, nature, batch, bastion (some accents), cello, Czech, Deutschmark
/dʒ/	g, j, dg, dge, d, di, gi, ge, dj, gg	magic, jump, ledger, bridge, graduate, soldier, Belgian, dungeon, Djibouti, exaggerate
/h/	h, wh, j, ch	he, who, fajita, chutzpah
/j/	y, i, j, ll	yes, onion, hallelujah, tortilla
/l/	l, ll, lh	line, hallo, Lhasa
/w/	w, u, o, ou, wh (in most dialects)	we, queen, choir, Ouija board, what
/hw/	wh (in some dialects)	wheel

Vowels		
IPA	Spelling	Examples
/i:/	e, ea, ee, e...e, ae, ei, i...e, ie, eo, oe, ie...e, ay, ey, i, y, oi, ue, ey, a	be, beach, bee, cede, Caesar, deceit, machine, field, people, amoeba, hygiene, quay, key, ski, city, chamois, Portuguese, geyser (Br), karaoke
/ɪ/	i, y, ui, e, ee, ie, o, u, a, ei, ee, ia, ea, i...e, ai, ey, oe	bit, myth, build, pretty, been (some accents), sieve, women, busy, damage, counterfeit, carriage, mileage, medicine, bargain, Ceylon, oedema
/u:/	oo, u, o, u...e, ou, ew, ue, o...e, ui, eu, oeu, oe, ough, wo, ioux, ieu, ault, oup, w	tool, luminous, who, flute, soup, jewel, true, lose, fruit, maneuver (US), manoeuvre (Br), canoe, through, two, Sioux, lieutenant (US), Sault Sainte Marie, coup, cwm
/ʊ/	oo, u, o, oo...e, or, ou, oul	look, full, wolf, gooseberry, worsted, courier, should
/eɪ/	a, a...e, aa, ae, ai, ai...e, aig, aigh, al, ao, au, ay, e (é), e...e, ea, eg, ei, ei...e, eig, eigh, ee (ée), eh, er, es, et, ey, ez, ie, oeh	bass, rate, quaalude, reggae, rain, cocaine, arraign, straight, Ralph (Br), gaol (Br), gauge, pay, ukulele (café), crepe, steak, thegn, veil, beige, reign, eight, matinee (soirée), eh, dossier, demesne, ballet, obey, chez, lingerie (US), boehmeite
/ə/	a, e, o, u, ai, ou, eig, y, ah, ough, gh, ae, oi	another, anthem, awesome, atrium, mountain, callous, foreign, beryl, Messiah, borough (Br), Edinburgh, Michael, porpoise
/oʊ/	o, o...e, oa, ow, ou, oe, oo, eau, oh, ew, au, aoh, ough, eo	so, bone, boat, know, soul, foe, brooch, beau, oh, sew, mauve, pharaoh, furlough, yeoman
/ɛ/	e, ea, a, ae, ai, ay, ea...e, ei, eo, ie, ieu, u, ue, oe	met, weather, many, aesthetic, said, says, cleanse, heifer, jeopardy, friend, lieutenant (Br), bury, guess, foetid
/æ/	a, ai, al, au, i	hand, plaid, salmon, laugh (some accents), meringue
/ʌ/	u, o, o...e, oe, ou, oo, wo	sun, son, come, does, touch, flood, twopennce
/ɔ:/	a, au, aw, ough, augh, o, oa, oo, al, uo, u, ao	fall, author, jaw, bought, caught, cord, broad, door, walk, fluorine (Br), sure (some accents), extraordinary
/ɒ/	o, a, eau, ach, au, ou	lock, watch, bureaucracy, yacht, sausage, cough

/ɑː/	a, ah, aa, i	father, blah , baa , lingerie (US)
/aɪ/	ae, ai, aie, aille, ais, ay, aye, ei, eigh, ey, eye, i, i...e, ia, ie, ic, ig, igh, is, oi, ui, uy, uye, y, y...e, ye	maestro, krait, shanghaied, canaille (RP), aisle, kayak, aye , heist, height , geyser (US), eye , mic, fine , diaper , tie , indict, sign , high , isle , choir , guide , buy , guyed , tryst , type , bye
/ɔɪ/	oi, oy, awy, uoy oy...e, eu	foil , toy , lawyer , buoy , gargoyle, Freudian
/aʊ/	ou, ow, ough, au, ao	out , now , bough , tau , Laos
/ɑr/	aar, ar, are, arre, ear, er, our, uar	bazaar, car , are , bizarre , heart , sergeant , our (some accents), guard
/ɛə/	aar, aer, air, aire, ar, are, ayer, ayor, ayr, ear, eir, er, ere, err, erre, ey're, e'er	Aaron , aerial , hair , millionaire, ware , vary , prayer , mayor , Ayr , bear , heir , stationery (some accents), where , err (variant), parterre , they're , e'er
/ɪə/	ear, eer, eir, eor, ere, ers, e're, ier, iere, ir, ire	ear , beer , weir , theory (US), here , revers , we're , pier , premiere , menhir , Zaire
/ɜr/	er, or, ur, ir, yr, our, ear, err, eur, yrrh, ar, oeu, olo, uer	fern , worst , turn , thirst , myrtle , journey , earth , err , amateur , myrrh , grammar , hors d'oeuvre , colonel , Guernsey
/juː/	u, u...e, eu, ue, ieu, eau, ieu, ueue, ui, ewe, ew	music* , use , feud , cue , view , beautiful* , adieu* , queue , nuisance* , ewe , few , * in some dialects, see Yod dropping

See also

- English language
- False etymology
- Spelling bee

Conventions of English spelling

- English plural
- I before E except after C
- Three letter rule

Variant spelling

- American and British English spelling differences
- Internet spelling
- Misspelling
 - Satiric misspelling
 - Sensational spelling
- Spelling of disc

Phonetic orthographic systems

- English spelling reform
- Basic Roman spelling of English
- Interspel
- Shavian alphabet

Graphemes

- Apostrophe
- Eth
- Long s
- Thorn (letter)

Words in English

- Lists of English words
- Classical compound

- Ghoti
- Initial-stress-derived noun

English phonology

- List of English homographs
- Regional accents of English
 - IPA chart for English dialects
- Weak form and strong form

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- [2] English language. (2010). In *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Retrieved November 23, 2010, from *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*: (<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/188048/English-language>)
- [3] Often this is because of the historical pronunciation of each word where, over time, two separate sounds become the same but the different spellings remain: *plane* used to be pronounced /'ple:n/, but the /e:/ sound merged with the /eɪ/ sound in *plain*, making *plain* and *plane* homonyms.
- [4] Rollins 2004: 16-19; Chomsky & Halle 1968; Chomsky 1970
- [5] Chomsky & Halle 1968:54
- [6] Chomsky 1970:294; Rollins 2004:17
- [7] Rollins 2004:17-19
- [8] Included in Webster's Third New International Dictionary, 1981
- [9] *Righting the Mother Tongue: From Olde English to Email, the Twisted Story of English Spelling*, by David Wolman. Collins, ISBN 9780061369254. (<http://www.rightingthemothertongue.com/>)

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External links

- Transcription Writer ([http://www.forcemem.com/Download Transcription Writer.htm](http://www.forcemem.com/Download%20Transcription%20Writer.htm)) freeware program is designed to write English words with the help of phonetic symbols
- Rules for English Spelling: Adding Suffixes (<http://www.kwiznet.com/p/takeQuiz.php?ChapterID=10015&CurriculumID=26>), QU Rule (<http://www.kwiznet.com/p/takeQuiz.php?ChapterID=10016&CurriculumID=26>), i before e (<http://www.kwiznet.com/p/takeQuiz.php?ChapterID=10017&CurriculumID=26>), Silent e (<http://www.kwiznet.com/p/takeQuiz.php?ChapterID=10018&CurriculumID=26>), 'er' vs. 'or' (<http://www.kwiznet.com/p/takeQuiz.php?ChapterID=10021&CurriculumID=26>)
- White Paper (<http://www.espindle.org/whitepaper.pdf>) Research based Tutoring of English Spelling
- Hou tu pranownse English (<http://zompist.com/spell.html>) describes rules which predict a word's pronunciation from its spelling with 85% accuracy
- Free spelling information ([http://www.thephonicspage.org/On Spelling/onspellinglinks.html](http://www.thephonicspage.org/On%20Spelling/onspellinglinks.html)) and Free spelling lessons in QuickTime movie format ([http://www.thephonicspage.org/On Spelling/spellinglessons1.html](http://www.thephonicspage.org/On%20Spelling/spellinglessons1.html)) at The Phonics Page (<http://www.thephonicspage.org/>).

English words with diacritics

Some English language words have letters with diacritical marks. Most of the words are loanwords from French, with others coming from Spanish, German, or other languages. Some are however originally English, or at least their diacritics are. Proper nouns are not generally counted, except when used as an eponym.

Words imported from other languages

Non-English words enter the English language by a process of "naturalization", or specifically Anglicisation, which is carried out mostly unconsciously (a similar process occurs in all other languages). During this process there is a tendency for accents and other diacritics that were present in the donor language to be dropped (for example *à propos*, which lost both the accent and space to become *apropos*). In many cases, imported words can be found in print in both their accented and unaccented versions. Since modern dictionaries are mostly descriptive and no longer prescribe outdated forms, they increasingly list unaccented forms, though in some cases the only correct English spelling (as given by the OED and other dictionaries) requires the diacritic (e.g., *soupçon*, *façade*).

Words that retain their accents often do so to help indicate pronunciation (e.g. *frappé*, *naïve*, *soufflé*), or to help distinguish them from an unaccented English word (e.g. *exposé*, *résumé*, *rosé*). Technical terms or those associated with specific fields (especially cooking or musical terms) are less likely to lose their accents (such as the French *soupçon*, *façade* and *entrée*).

Some Spanish words with the letter *ñ* have been naturalised by substituting *ny* (e.g. *cañón* is now usually *canyon*, *piñón* is now usually *pinyon*). Certain words like *piñata*, *jalapeño* and *quinceañera* are usually kept intact. In many instances the *ñ* is replaced with the plain letter *n*. In words of German origin, the letters with umlauts *ä*, *ö*, *ü* may be written *ae*, *oe*, *ue*. This could be seen in many newspapers during World War II, which printed *Fuehrer* for *Führer*. However, umlauts are usually now left out instead, with no *e* following the previous letter.

Sometimes diacritics are even added to imported words that originally didn't have any, often to distinguish them from common English words or to assist in proper pronunciation; *maté* from Spanish *mate* and *animé* are examples of these. Occasionally, hypercorrection can occur with borrowed words, with diacritics added where there should be none in the erroneous belief that this is the correct form. An example is the addition of an accent to the *e* in *latte*, to become *latté* or even *lattè*. In Italian, where an accent (almost always a grave accent) is used to indicate stress on the final syllable, *latte* is stressed on the first syllable, so has no accent. However, confusion with French *café* or Italian *caffè* leads to the unnecessary accent being added.

Native English words

In rare cases, the diacritic is not borrowed from any foreign language but is purely of English origin. It typically serves as a pronunciation guide, e.g., to mark a diaeresis. Examples include the *ö* in the now rare variant spellings of words such as *coöperation* (compare the original French *coopération*) and *coöperative* (e.g. the Harvard/MIT Coöperative Society), and the *è* that indicates a stressed syllable in words such as *cursèd* (again rare and mostly encountered in poetry or song lyrics).

Diacritics are sometimes added to make a word "seem foreign" for marketing purposes, such as foreign branding and the heavy metal umlaut.

Regional differences

Diacritics appear to be more acceptable in Canada than in the US, where anglophones are used to seeing French on food packaging, and French words often retain their orthography, for example *café*, *Montréal*, *née*, *Québec*, and *résumé*.

See also

- Diacritics
- Loan words
- English language: Written accents

Lists

- Wiktionary:Appendix:English words with diacritics
 - Lists of English words of international origin
 - List of English words of French origin
 - French phrases used by English speakers
 - List of German expressions in English
 - List of English words of Spanish origin
 - Wiktionary:Transwiki:List of Spanish expressions in common English
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Standard written English

Standard written English

Standard written English refers to the preferred form of English as it is written according to prescriptive authorities associated with publishing houses and schools. As there is no regulatory body for the English language, there is some disagreement about correct usage, though there is enough agreement that the written form of English is relatively transcendent of dialectal variation. In addition to being used in written media such as books and newspapers, it is also the basis of Signed English.

John H. Fisher, author of *The Emergence of Standard English*, observes that in Spanish, Italian, French, and English, the written languages became standardised before the spoken languages, and that these provide frames of reference for what is considered standard speech. He said, in an interview for the Children of the Code project:^[1]

I came to the conclusion that all of the discussion of standardisation of language was a discussion of the written forms of language. It had nothing to do with spoken language. We don't have the spoken language standardised yet. When we say that we're speaking Standard English, what we're doing is transferring into our spoken vocabulary and syntax the elements of the written language. What is standard in what you and I are talking now is what we get from our writing.

Relationship with spoken forms

There are grammatical constructions and words that one uses in speech that one generally avoids in written compositions. Even in the most colloquial of online chats, interjections such as "like" are rarer than in speech.

Stephen Fry stated his view on the exclusivities of Written English in an anonymous essay on Wodehouse:

The language, however, lives and breathes in its written, printed form. Let me use an example, taken at random.

I flip open a book of stories and happen on Bertie and Jeeves discussing a young man called Cyril Bassington-Bassington.

'Jeeves: "I am familiar with the name Bassington-Bassington, sir. There are three branches of the Bassington-Bassington family – the

Shropshire Bassington-Bassingtons, the Hampshire Bassington-Bassingtons, and the Kent Bassington-Bassingtons."

Well, try as hard as actors might, such an exchange will always work best on the page.

Indeed, Wodehouse uses this aspect of the written language when the name "Psmith" is explained on the page as being "Psmith" with a silent "P" as in "Pshrimp." This humour cannot be translated into the spoken word.

Morphology

Because of a writing system that incorporates etymology, spelling cues not present in oral discourse can give readers additional clues to the relationship between words through a vague awareness of different morphological classes.

Anglo-Saxon words are usually characterised by a cloudy morphology (*early\ere*), wildly unphonemic spelling, and the presence of silent letters and digraphs. Common affixes are “un-”, “-ful”, and “-ness”. These are the most common words used to describe everyday, informal and interpersonal matters.

Romance words are also common and bear closer resemblance to French morphemes and words (*very\vrais*). There is often more regularity in their spelling.

Latinate and Greek words are set apart from Romance words by very methodical morphology, Classical Latin and Greek morphemes, and consistent spelling. They usually have rigid definitions and are used more frequently in formal and scientific writing as well as in constructing technical, philosophical, and legal jargon.

Hybrids (e.g. *kay*, *Byte*, *Prisoner*) have the relative formality and familiarity of Romance words.

Change through time

To most modern readers, the temporal horizon of intelligibility of Written English (independently of speech) is very roughly 600 years, assuming minimal regional variation. There are exceptions. An astute modern reader might extrapolate “**Well thou writest.**” from the millennium-old sentence “**Wel ðu writst.**”

- **Dated circa 1000 AD.**

```
Fæder ure þu þe eart on heofonum si þin nama
gehalgod tobecume þin rice gewurþe þin willa
on eorðan swa swa on heofonum urne
gedæghwamlican hlaf syle us to dæg
and forgyf us ure gyltas
swa swa we forgyfað urum gyltendum
and ne gelæd þu us on costnunge ac alys us of yfele
soþlice.
```

- **Dated 1384 AD.**

```
Ovre fadir þat art in hevenes halwid be þi name;
þi revme or kyngdom come to be.
Be þi wille don in herþe as it is down in hevene.
yeve to vs today ovre eche dayes bred.
And foryeve to vs ovre dettis þat is ovre synnys as we foryeven to ovre dettovris þat is to men
þat han synned in us.
And lede vs not into temptacion bvt delyvere vs from evyl.
```

- **Dated 1611 AD.**

```
Ovr father which art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.
Give vs this day ovr daily bread.
And forgive vs ovr debts as we forgive ovr debtors.
And lead vs not into temptation,
bvt deliver vs from evill.
```

Amen .

Degradation

Grammar is defined as (1) the study of the way the sentences of a language are constructed; morphology and syntax, or (2) a description of the rules of the structure of a language; the way words combine, the order they come in, the way they change according to their relationship to other words, how they build up into units like a sentence etc. (<http://www.usingenglish.com/glossary.html>). Students have always struggled with grammar as expressed by the number of students who dislike their English classes in school. However, there appear to be disturbing trends to the loss of the correct use of written grammar. This could be a result of an increase in technological devices which encourage shortening words to fit in small areas or the reduced need for capitalizations or punctuation (text messages, twitter, etc.), spell check programs, and possibly even mass entertainment that purposely uses incorrect grammar. Some grammar terms are obscure even to those who deal with the use of written English, while other concepts are well known even if the term itself is unknown (see homograph).

To those particular about their grammar, some mistakes are like flares on a moonless night. One of those mistakes is the misuse of homophones (words that are spelled different but sound the same). Common homophones include variations of their, your, and two. There are various approaches to these mistakes such as corrections within comment sections as seen on Facebook posts, blogs or websites that search for examples of poor grammar and then make fun of them (<http://cakewrecks.blogspot.com/> or <http://grammatically.blogspot.com/>), or websites whose goal is to help fix confusion (<http://www.wikihow.com/Use-You%27re-and-Your>).

Of concern in society today is the prevalence of the relaxed writing that has occurred. In one college English class a paper was turned in that used common texting abbreviations or shorthand such as “2” rather than the word, or letter initials such as “C” and “U”. The paper was turned in with the idea that those abbreviations were acceptable. The question then becomes is this degradation that is rampant in society of concern, and if so how do we fix it? Is it the sole responsibility of professional teachers, or should it be something that society needs to figure out how to make something that peers will be aware of as well? Or do we not concern ourselves with these types of errors because of the nature of languages changing over time?

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See also

- English spelling reform

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Wells, Timneue22, Timwi, Tingrin17, Tinyan1117, Tjtenor2, Tnxman307, Tobias Conradi, Tobias Hoevekamp, Tom, Tomzo, Topclaw, Toussaint, Tout pret, Tpbroadbury, Traceylane, Trackinfo, Travelbird, Trevor MacLinnis, Triage, Tribalinja, TriniMuñoz, Triton Rocker, Triwbe, Troll666, Trusilver, Trystan Morris-Davies, TubularWorld, Tw166y, Twin Bird, U-146, UBEr, Uisce, Ukabia, Uncle Dick, Ungvichian, Unimaginative Username, UnlinedPage, Unrulyevl, Urdina, Uris, UrsalLinguaBWD, User27091, Utcurseh, Uxejin, VKokielov, Van helsing, Vaniba12, Vanwhistler, Vartik, Vary, Vasa0001, Vayu, Veinor, Velho, Velvetron, Veritas4ever, Vermiculus, Verrai, Versus22, Vgmaster, Vgy7ujim, Viccar M Khan, Vickywoff, VictorianMutant, Victorius, Villy van der Veelen, Vipinhari, Visor, Viyu5, VolatileChemical, Vraumdse, Vtstarin, Vuo, WHeimbigner, Wafulz, Waggors, Waheedulhasan1, Wahkeenah, WakawakaMZ, Wakuran, WalesLord, Walkerma, Wassermann, Watch37264, Wavelength, Wayward, Welcraft18, Welsh, Welwitschia, WendyLauren, West Brom 4ever, Westee, Whimmesz, WhisperToMe, White Shadows, Widefox, Wiglaf, Wik, Wiki alf, Wiki-Ed, Wiki01916, WikiLeon, WikiWitch, Wikiacc, Wikieditor06, Wikiklrcs, Wikipediarius2221, Wikipeditor40, Wikipéire, Wikiscribe, Wikusdotoit, Wilborut, Will Beback, Willhamy, William Avery, Willkilling1979, WilyD, Wimt, Windowsbeak, WiniWidiWici, Winkin, Wise mike, Wishbone 676, Wiwaxia, Wizofaus, Wmaham, Wnsoren, Wobultra, Wolfkeeper, Won-andrew, Wonder al, Woodstone, Woodysee, Woohookitty, Wordwright, Wowkids38, Wragge, Wshun, Wtmitchell, Wuhwuzdat, Ww, Wwlandedru, Wödenhelm, XJamRastafire, Xdenizen, Xipirho, Xzgmamxzx, Yacht, Yalens, Yamamoto Ichiro, Yandman, Yann, YixilTeshion, Ylem, Yogi02kumar, Yolgnu, Yonatan, Yosri, Youed, Your Only Real Friend, Youssefsan, Yst, Yug, YusufIslam, Yyy, ZPM, ZX81, Zachary98, Zagsa, Zap Rowdsdower, Zaps, Zaxios, Zeimusu, Zeiros, Zeman, Zeno Gantner, Zepheus, Zeth, Zginder, Zhen Lin, Zigger, Zoe, Zoney, Zoomzoom316, Zotel, Zscout370, Zzorse, Zzuuzz, Zé da Silva, Ævar Arnfjörð Bjarnason, Æle flottante, Алексаандр, 3206 anonymous edits

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The screenshot shows the homepage of Tunisia-études.info. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the site name 'TUNISIE-ETUDES.INFO' and three menu items: 'Tous les documents', 'BAC', and 'Avis de co'. Below this is a 'Newsflash' section with a blue background and white text, stating: 'Tunisie-etudes.info vous aide dans votre préparation pour le concours de IENA. Documents de préparation pour le concours national tunisien de IENA'. A 'Home' button is visible below the newsflash. On the left side, there is a 'Main Menu' with a list of links: Home, News, Web Links, Documents, Primaire, Collège, Secondaire, and Supérieur. The main content area features a 'BIENVENUE SUR TUNISIE-ETUDES.INFO' section with a sub-heading 'Avis de concours', 'Écrit par Administrateur', and a date 'Mercredi, 20 Janvier 2010 08:47'. The text below reads: 'Accéder aux derniers avis de concours publier par les entreprises tunisiennes au jour le jour directement sur votre site' and includes a link 'Avis de concours en direct'. At the bottom of this section, there are links for 'Accès aux documents' and 'Retrouvez nous sur FaceBook'.

Merci d'avoir choisi www.tunisie-etudes.info
Bonne lecture et bon travail

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